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BOOKS BY SIDNEY HOWARD

HALF GODS

NED McCOBB'S DAUGHTER
A Comedy in Three Acts

THE SILVER CORD
A Comedy in Three Acts

LUCKY SAM McCARVER
Four Episodes in the Life of a New Yorker

THREE FLIGHTS UP
A Volume of Stories

Published by
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

HALF GODS

HALF GODS

BY

SIDNEY HOWARD

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK : LONDON
1930

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SIDNEY HOWARD

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To

DUNCAN AND JEAN McDUFFIE

"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"

A. Conan Doyle.

Half Gods was first performed under the management of Arthur Hopkins at Parson's Theatre, Hartford, Connecticut, on December 16th, 1929. Its first performance in New York took place at Mr. Hopkins' Plymouth Theatre on December 21st, 1929. On both occasions the cast was as follows:

Stephen Ferrier	Donn Cook
Hope Ferrier	Mayo Methot
Ada	Elizabeth Goodyear
Dennis	Paul Porter
Rush Bigelow	Walter Regan
Judge Sturgis	Walter Walker
Helena Grey	Dorothy Sands
Dr. Mannering	Edward Reese
First Policeman	Robert Bunce Williams
Second Policeman	Philip Beveridge
Pauline	Laura Hamilton
First Porter	Arthur Shaw
Second Porter	Hal K. Dawson
Third Porter	Thaddeus Clancy
Dr. Wohlheim	Siegfried Rumann
First Detective	Arthur Shaw
Second Detective	Hal K. Dawson

The settings were designed by Albert R. Johnson. The production was directed by Mr. Hopkins.

THE CHARACTERS

STEPHEN. *Aged 33.*

HOPE. *Aged 29.*

ADA. *The maid.*

DENNIS. *The gasman.*

RUSH. *Aged 35.*

JUDGE STURGIS. *Aged 69.*

HELENA. *Aged 39.*

DR. MANNERING. *Aged 45.*

TWO POLICE OFFICERS.

PAULINE. *Aged 23.*

THREE PORTERS.

DR. WOHLHEIM. *Aged 50.*

TWO DETECTIVES.

THE SCENES

1. *The Ferriers' Flat. The bedroom. A morning in October.*
2. *The Ferriers' Flat. The living room. Afternoon of the same day.*
3. *Dr. Mannering's Office. Afternoon of the following day.*
4. *Helena's Bookshop. Afternoon. Some time later.*
5. *A Long Island Police Station. Early the following morning.*
6. *Judge Sturgis' Private Office. Some months later.*
7. *The Ferriers' Flat. The living room. The following Monday.*
8. *Polly's Sitting Room. The following afternoon.*
9. *The Ferriers' Flat. The bedroom. That same evening.*

In and Near New York.

THE PRESENT DAY.

This play is designed for production without any intermission longer than is required for the shifting of its very simple settings. The settings should be designed so that one scene can fade into the next almost as in a talking motion picture. If an intermission seems imperative it should occur after the fifth scene.

HALF GODS

THE FIRST SCENE

A Bedroom with twin beds in a duplex apartment in the East Seventies of New York. It is furnished in the taste of a young couple of sufficient means and personal distinction. One door gives on the gallery which overlooks the drawing room. Another gives on the bath. This door stands open at the rise of the curtain.

HOPE, *a most attractive and appealing young wife and mother, lies in her bed, holding on to sleep for dear life.*

STEPHEN, *a no less attractive husband and father, can be seen shaving in the bathroom. He wears his dressing gown.*

STEPHEN

[*After a pause for completing his shave and without turning from the mirror*]: Eight . . . hours . . . sleep . . . [*Rinsing the face*]: To do the work I have to do I *need* . . . eight . . . hours . . . sleep . . . [*Drying the face.*] A man has a right to . . . eight . . . hours . . . sleep . . . [*The final touches.*] Eight . . . good . . . sound . . . hours. [*He comes out of the bathroom.*] Of course, Napoleon could get along on four, but then . . . [*He sheds his dressing gown*

and stands revealed in socks, garters, shorts and undershirt.] I'm not Napoleon.. [*He dives into a drawer for a shirt.*] Not Napoleon and . . . Aren't you getting up this morning?

HOPE

[*Turning over to get her head deeper in the pillow*]: No, darling. I thought I'd rest this morning.

STEPHEN

Rest . . . I see. [*Putting studs in the shirt*]: Might I ask if you're any more tired than I am?

HOPE

[*As before*]: No, darling, I don't suppose I am.

STEPHEN

[*Still at the studs and having trouble with them*]: You certainly didn't stay up any later than I did.

HOPE

[*Pressing the ear further in*]: No, darling, of course I didn't.

STEPHEN

Then I should think you'd get up. I should think . . . [*Shirt over the head*]: that ordinary consideration for me . . . [*Emerging*]: would make you get up.

HOPE

[*Lifting her head at last*]: I don't see how it can possibly make any difference to you whether I get up or not, and I haven't a thing to do until lunch.

STEPHEN

I have a hard day's work to do. . . . A day's work for which a man needs eight hours sleep. . . . And if you had any conception of sportsmanship . . .

HOPE

I don't see what sportsmanship's got to do with it!

STEPHEN

Well, if you're going to quibble!

HOPE

[*Desperate*]: Oh, my God! [*She gets up, thrusts her feet into her mules, wriggles into her negligée.*] There! Now, are you satisfied?

STEPHEN

[*He begins on collar and tie while she crosses to her dressing table to brush her hair.*] Remember that going out last night was your idea. Not mine.

HOPE

Now, don't bring that up!

STEPHEN

Please don't take that tone, Hope!

HOPE

[*Savage at her hair*]: I'm a sincere woman, Steve, and I can't make my tone any friendlier than my feelings.

STEPHEN

In that case, I'd better not say what I had in mind.

HOPE

Do you mean I can go back to bed?

STEPHEN

No. I'll say it anyway. [*But in manoeuvring for a view of the mirror over her shoulder, he inadvertently steps on her foot.*] I'm sorry! Did I step on your foot?

HOPE

It's all right, Steve. The mirror's yours.

STEPHEN

Thank you.

HOPE

Not at all.

STEPHEN

[*He finishes his tie*]: I asked you to get up because I've reached a very significant decision.

HOPE

Have you? When?

STEPHEN

Just now while I was shaving. [*She rises and rings for breakfast.*] A decision which is going to affect the entire balance of our lives. [*He bends for his shoes under a chair.*]

HOPE

Then it could certainly have waited until dinner! [*She goes into the bathroom, banging the door after her. He sits up rigid with indignation.*]

STEPHEN

Hope! ! ! [*Pause. He raises his voice so that she cannot help hearing him.*] The breadwinner of the American home is not getting a fair break! [*No answer. He continues, louder.*] As breadwinner of this home, I have decided to assert my rights! [*Still no answer. Louder still.*] From now on! [*Still no answer.*] That's what I've decided, Hope! [*Still no answer.*] Do you hear me? [*Still no answer. He returns to his shoes grumbling to himself.*] I've seen the light. The light which I might describe as the "breadwinner" or "husband-and-father" light. [*Hope returns and makes for her bed.*] Did you hear me, Hope?

HOPE

[*Not looking at him*]: I suppose you know you've left your razor all over the place in there.

STEPHEN

Don't put me off!

HOPE

All right. Get on with your complaining.

STEPHEN

Every time the help send my sleeve links to the laundry you take their side against me! [*Having*

scored this point, he goes to fetch his trousers.] I call them help. God knows they don't help me!

HOPE

Anything else?

STEPHEN

[*He turns, holding his trousers ready to receive his legs.*] Every time I venture a suggestion on the running of this house you ask me why I didn't marry a good housewife with buck teeth! [*He pulls the trousers on.*] I work. I slave. You take all that for granted. You don't make the least effort to appreciate me. I told you what Elihu Root said about me!

HOPE

You certainly did!

STEPHEN

And still you put anything . . . [*He is adjusting his trousers.*] The children's whims, the cook's convenience, your own pleasure, not to say self-indulgence, before my comfort. I'm nothing . . . I'm a cipher . . . in my own home that I pay for! God, *how* I pay? When I tell you I need eight hours sleep, you laugh!

HOPE

I didn't laugh!

STEPHEN

What makes you take this so personally? [*Waistcoat.*] I'm not singling you out from other American wives. I'm thinking largely.

HOPE

Largely?

STEPHEN

Largely. Of the American wife in general.

HOPE

[*Not quite respectful*]: Yes, darling.

STEPHEN

We've heard enough about the rights of women. It's high time we took up the rights of men!

HOPE

Why don't you take them up?

STEPHEN

In a small way I mean to. From now on, and in so far as this house is concerned . . . [*A knock at the door.*]

HOPE

Come in! [ADA *enters.*] Good morning, Ada.

ADA

[*A glance askance at Stephen*]: Good morning, ma'am.

HOPE

Have the children got off to school?

ADA

Oh, yes, ma'am.

STEPHEN

[*Under his breath*]: My mother was always up to see *us* off!

HOPE

So was mine, Steve. [*Back to Ada*]: I rang for breakfast, Ada.

ADA

[*Another glance askance at Stephen*]: It isn't ready, ma'am.

STEPHEN

[*Under his breath*]: It's a fine state of affairs when breadwinners can get neither their sleep *nor* their breakfast!

ADA

There's a difficulty, sir.

HOPE

A difficulty about breakfast?

ADA

About the gas. [*Hope's eyes go wide with horror.*]

STEPHEN

[*Whirling on her*]: *What* about the gas?

ADA

[*A furtive glance to Hope to say that she'll have to tell*]: The gasman's just turned it off, sir.

HOPE

Now that really *is* tiresome! I'll complain! I'll get right out of bed— [*She does.*] and dress and go down and complain. Don't try to stop me, Steve! It won't hurt me a bit! It's a matter of principle with me! [*To Ada.*] Ada, give Mr. Ferrier some of little Steve's puffed rice. [*She goes to her dressing table, speaking to Steve.*] You put it right out of your mind. I'll make them write you a letter of apology. I suppose they're chopping up the street again, but even so . . .

STEPHEN

[*Stern*]: No, Hope, they're not chopping up the street.

HOPE

Don't be absurd, Steve! They're always chopping up the street!

STEPHEN

That isn't the trouble this time, Hope.

HOPE

Well, if they're not chopping up the street, I can't think what excuse . . . I can't think . . . I . . . [*Her performance falters.*]

STEPHEN

Ada, did the gasman say why he turned off the gas? [*A wild signal from Hope to Ada*]

ADA

[*Floundering*]: He did . . . he did say something, sir.

STEPHEN

Something about the bill?

HOPE

No! Why, Steve!

STEPHEN

Didn't he say the bill hadn't been paid, Ada?

HOPE

Oh, Steve! I couldn't have! Not again!

STEPHEN

It rather looks as though you had, my dear. [*Then, tragic*]: The gas turned off in my house for non-payment of . . .

ADA

Thirteen sixty-four.

HOPE

I'm terribly sorry. I don't know how it happened. I really don't. Please try not to be angry.

STEPHEN

[*Noble*]: I'm not angry, Hope.

HOPE

[*A gulp*]: Ada, will you please bring up my cheque book?

STEPHEN

I'll pay the bill, Hope. Then I'll know it's paid.

HOPE

But it comes out of the housekeeping money, Steve!

STEPHEN

[*Handing two bills to Ada—a ten and a five*]: Please give the gas man these. Tell him to keep the change. Tell him to turn the gas on again. Then cook my breakfast.

ADA

Yes, sir. [*She goes.*]

HOPE

[*A pause; then*]: It won't happen again, Steve.

STEPHEN

[*Still stern*]: It's happened before.

HOPE

Why *didn't* you marry a housewife with buck teeth?

STEPHEN

I asked you if you'd paid that bill.

HOPE

I meant to pay it.

STEPHEN

But why did you tell me you'd paid it when you hadn't?

HOPE

You certainly are a lawyer! [*Nothing left to do but be appealing.*] Please forgive me, Steve. It isn't that I don't try. Trying just doesn't seem to do any good. I forget just the same. Then I get panicky. If you knew how panicky I am this minute!

STEPHEN

I don't know what you expect me to do about it.

HOPE

I expect you to be my Steve about it. [*But her Steve is whistling soundlessly through his teeth.*] If that's how you feel . . . You've no right to make me such a scene, though!

STEPHEN

[*Exploding*]: No sleep! No breakfast! And now no right to make a scene! Will you tell me, please, what I do get out of this?

HOPE

This what?

STEPHEN

This marriage business!

HOPE

I certainly don't know what *I* get out of it!

STEPHEN

You don't put anything into it!

HOPE

We both know what can be done about it, don't we?

STEPHEN

[*A horrified pause, then*]: Hope! You can't mean that!

HOPE

Why can't I?

STEPHEN

But, my dear! We've never said anything like that before!

HOPE

[*Venomously*]: If you knew how I loathe housekeeping!

STEPHEN

I do know . . . But Hope! . . .

HOPE

Let's drop it.

STEPHEN

You can't drop a thing like that! I won't be able to think of anything else all day! Please tell me you didn't mean . . .

HOPE

One can't help getting ideas sometimes.

STEPHEN

Only there's so much of that these days!

HOPE

These days! Yes, isn't there! [*A knock at the door.*] Come in! [ADA *enters.*]

ADA

It's the gasman, ma'am. [*She turns to the door where* DENNIS *appears.*] He wont turn the gas on again. He says he can't without an order from the office.

HOPE

Well . . . [*She sees* DENNIS.] Good morning.

DENNIS

Good morning, ma'am.

HOPE

My maid says . . .

DENNIS

I wish I could oblige.

HOPE

How long will the order take?

DENNIS

Not more than a week, ma'am.

HOPE

But I can't go a week without gas! I've got two little children!

STEPHEN

Anyone can overlook a little bill! You turn that gas on or I'll . . .

DENNIS

Get to the president?

STEPHEN

How did you know?

DENNIS

They all say that.

STEPHEN

I'll report you for insolence!

DENNIS

I wish you would, sir. Every ten times we get reported, they give us a gold star.

HOPE

[*Suddenly out of control*]: I can't bear it! I can't bear it another minute!

DENNIS

Don't take it so hard, ma'am. We turn off the gas every month or so on half the young married couples in this town. Of the better class, that is. [*He turns to* STEPHEN.] Seems like the little women get less responsible every day. And harder to control.

HOPE

[*Striding about*]: I can't bear it!

STEPHEN

Good morning.

DENNIS

Yes, sir. [*To* HOPE, *who is now striding wildly about*]: If I was you ma'am, I'd get one of them tenement meters you put a quarter in. They may not be classy, but they certainly keep you up. [*He goes.* ADA *follows.*]

HOPE

[*Quite beside herself*]: I can't bear it another minute! I've come to the end of my rope! I'm going mad!

STEPHEN

[*Immediately sympathetic*]: Hope, darling! It doesn't matter! It doesn't matter a damn!

HOPE

I ought never to have married you! I've ruined your life!

STEPHEN

You mustn't say such things!

HOPE

It's true! I'm a rotten wife! A terrible wife!

STEPHEN

My precious Hope, you're a perfect wife!

HOPE

No gas for a week!

STEPHEN

He doesn't know we're the gas company's attorneys!

HOPE

[*Shaking her head in despair*]: We'll never have any gas again! You ought to kick me out, Steve! You really ought!

STEPHEN

Hope, darling! Please!

HOPE

[*Flinging her arms around his neck*]: I try to make it up to you in other ways!

STEPHEN

[*Holding her close*]: You do!

HOPE

Keeping you amused and loving you. You love me, don't you, Steve? Please tell me you love me, Steve!

STEPHEN

I love you, darling.

HOPE

Tell me! Tell me!

STEPHEN

I love you. Really.

HOPE

Yes, I think you do. I'm not always sure, but I think you do. And I need to be sure, Steve. [*With a surprising intensity*]: I need terribly to be sure!

STEPHEN

Hope!

HOPE

No. I will be sure. And you'll be patient with me, won't you?

STEPHEN

I'm sorry I was edgy.

HOPE

You were right to be. Forgive? You *can* get *some* breakfast on your way down, can't you?

STEPHEN

Don't worry about me!

HOPE

Kiss me goodbye!

STEPHEN

Goodbye, my darling! [*He kisses her passionately. She responds passionately.*] There!

HOPE

[*Tearfully emerging from the embrace*]: And don't be late getting home. Remember, we're dining out and going on to . . .

STEPHEN

[*Fortissimo*]: What! Again!!!

HOPE

Steve!

STEPHEN

After last night and the night before and the night before that and . . .

HOPE

Don't shout that way, Steve!

STEPHEN

Are you trying to kill me?

HOPE

Steve, will you please stop shouting at me?

STEPHEN

I won't go out tonight!

HOPE

You've got to, Steve! We can't back out now!

STEPHEN

I tell you, *I won't go out!*

HOPE

What *do* you want to do? Stay home and look at your damn movies of the children?

STEPHEN

Be careful, Hope!

HOPE

Hah!

STEPHEN

I try to make you understand that a man needs eight hours sleep!

HOPE

Rot!

STEPHEN

It is *not* rot! It's a physiological fact of the utmost importance!

HOPE

I've got a right to some amusement!

STEPHEN

Look out, now! Look out!

HOPE

I've got a right! I've got a right!

STEPHEN

Well, you want to look out, that's all! All you young wives! Do you know what your husbands are saying about you? That you're not worth the price! That's what! Not worth the price!

HOPE

Oh, you'll be sorry *you* said that!

STEPHEN

Not worth the price!

HOPE

You'll be sorry!

STEPHEN

My God, marriage!

HOPE

You'll be . . .

STEPHEN

It's a hell of an institution! [*He storms out. She stands crying bitterly in her impotent rage.*]

THE SECOND SCENE

The drawing room of the same flat on the evening of the same day. It is a charming room and expresses the same distinguished taste as the bedroom of the first scene. A stair goes to the gallery from which the living quarters open. Doors give on the dining room and the entry. The walls are light in tone. Essential properties include a cabinet in which Stephen *keeps his liquor and a small motion picture projector. One lamp is lighted at the rise of the curtain.*

[*A pause, then*]:

Stephen

[*Off-stage*]: It seems . . . [*He enters from the entry wearing a top coat and hat.* Rush Bigelow, *similarly dressed, follows him in.* Rush *is the perfect New York graduate of the World War and his poise looks like intelligence until you look again.*] It seems you've got a muscle between your stomach and your upper intestine that just won't do what's expected of it unless you feed it the right amount of hydrochloric acid.

Rush

That's vitriol!

Stephen

It couldn't be! You're thinking of sulphuric acid!

RUSH

H_2SO_4.

STEPHEN

Hydrochloric is HCl and I can positively guarantee that the juice of two lemons drunk with every meal will make a new man of anybody.

RUSH

[*Incredulous*]: Better than bi-carb?

STEPHEN

Much. I'll go further. I'll say to you, Rush, that if any doctor you want to name were to walk into this room and offer me the choice between lemon juice and even a high irrigation, I wouldn't hesitate.

RUSH

That's going pretty strong!

STEPHEN

You see I'm serious. And when I remember the way I used to believe in yeast! [*He has shed his coat and hat and now bends over the liquor cabinet, unlocks it and, at the proper moment, extracts a bottle of gin.*] And the great thing about the lemon juice cure is: it doesn't matter what you put with the lemon juice.

RUSH

That certainly is an advantage over yeast.

STEPHEN

[*Hearty laughter as he touches a bell*]: And you'd be surprised how much gin you can get with the juice of two lemons if you use good judgment.

RUSH

No wonder you feel better!

STEPHEN

Oh, it's not the gin, Rush, I assure you, it is not the gin. [ADA *enters. She carries a tray laden with shaker and fixings. From her manner it is evident that drama hovers in the offing.*] Shaker, ice, sugar and lemon juice, please, Ada.

ADA

I have them here, sir. [*She puts them on the table.* STEPHEN *moves toward them.*]

STEPHEN

Oh, thanks! Children out to supper? [*To* RUSH]: It's terrible the social life kids lead these days. Out till half past six and seven every night! [*To* ADA]: Did Mrs. Ferrier say when she'd be in?

ADA

[*A gulp*]: She left a note, sir. There on the moving pictures.

STEPHEN

Oh, yes. [ADA *goes for the door, but waits there fascinated.* STEPHEN *picks up the note.*] I know what this says without reading it. "Steve darling: I may be late. Please get out of the bathroom." [*He opens it.*] In all the eight years I've been married, I've never once had a fair shot at that bathroom. Well, in the morning, but . . . [*As he reads, his voice dies in his throat.*]

RUSH

Something wrong? [*Numb,* STEPHEN *hands him the note. He reads it. Then*]: Good God! Hope, too!

ADA

[*With sudden violence*]: Yes! And I don't think it's fair to me the way this happens and breaks up every good place I get!

STEPHEN

That's a very interesting point of view, Ada. Only we'll discuss it later, if you don't mind. [ADA *goes. He turns to* RUSH.] I didn't know I was letting you in for anything like this!

RUSH

I'm damned glad I came along. I've been through it twice myself and I know how it feels. I'd have thought Hope had more sense. She hasn't got anything on you? I mean, she hasn't caught you chiselling?

STEPHEN

Do you think I'd be unfaithful to my wife?

RUSH

I don't suppose *you* would. And you may be right. It's a terrible thing the way women can make a little innocent chiselling run into money when they get to court. On the other hand a man has to think of himself these days. So as not to be caught the way you are, out in the air and all your arrangements still to make. Of course, you could get some one. By God! [*His stud book out.*] I know the very woman!

STEPHEN

You can't help me that way. I love Hope. I always shall love Hope. I don't want any woman but Hope. [*He sinks heavily into a chair.*]

RUSH

I'll have to think up some other way, then. [*He turns to the cocktail shaker and proceeds to tend bar.*] You were an ideal couple, you two. Say! What's happening to all our ideal couples?

STEPHEN

I don't know. This comes out of a blue sky for me. Well, blue enough.

RUSH

Just one of those things?

STEPHEN

Funny how much you hear that phrase these days!

RUSH

Isn't it! [*He fills Stephen's glass.*] Here. If you won't try fallen women, try this.

STEPHEN

Thanks. [*He tastes it.*]

RUSH

All right?

STEPHEN

Fine. [RUSH *tastes his.*] Taste the lemon juice?

RUSH

[*Nodding*]: Hm!

STEPHEN

It'll do you good. [*The glasses are emptied.*]

RUSH

Now, the main thing is not to be weak.

STEPHEN

Weak?

RUSH

I want to see you take Hope right up on this and pack her off to Reno in the morning.

STEPHEN

I don't want a divorce!

RUSH

Steve, you *are* going to be weak! You're not even sore!

STEPHEN

Oh, yes I *am* sore! I'm damned if I see where Hope's got the least kick against me! I've made her a good husband. Generous. Kind. Considerate. Patient. Courteous.—Always courteous. Which is a whole lot more than she's been. Faithful, too. God, how faithful! And a good father. One the children can be proud of. If they were old enough to appreciate good fathers. Because I'm making a name for myself in the law and don't you think I'm not. I told you what Elihu Root said about me. I told Hope, too, so she can't have a leg to stand on.

RUSH

Well, we both know what all women are!

STEPHEN

Yes. Just the same, I want her back. I want my children back. I need her to amuse me and keep me company and let me look after her and the children. Is that weak of me?

RUSH

Steve, it's weak as water!

STEPHEN

I can't help it. Let's have another drink. [*He holds out his glass.* RUSH *tends bar.*]

RUSH

I've always said and I always will say that the trouble with women is they don't have enough to do!

STEPHEN

I've said that too!

RUSH

To Hope?

STEPHEN

She didn't believe me.

RUSH

It's no use talking reasonably to 'em. You have to treat 'em like children. You have to . . . [*The door-bell rings.* STEPHEN *leaps to his feet.*] Hey! Keep your shirt on!

STEPHEN

That may be Hope!

RUSH

All the more reason!

STEPHEN

I've got feelings! I can't help showing 'em!

RUSH

You've got to help it! Never let any woman see she's got you down! [*He forces Stephen back into his chair.* ADA *crosses and goes into the entry.* RUSH *holds*

STEPHEN *who cranes his neck. They both listen. There are voices, words indistinguishable. Then* JUDGE STURGIS *enters wearing his hat and top coat. He is very old, very wise, very kindly and a good deal out of patience.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

Stephen!

STEPHEN

[*On his feet at once*]: You know what's happened, Judge!

JUDGE STURGIS

Hope and Helena just left my house.

STEPHEN

What does she say? Sit down for God's sake, Judge, and tell me! This is Rush Bigelow. He was our best man. He was here when I found Hope's note. Mr. Bigelow. Judge Sturgis. Hope's godfather. Judge, what *did* she say? If she said this is my fault, don't believe her! I'm no tin Jesus, but I'm no harder to live with than other men!

JUDGE STURGIS

I believe you, Stephen . . .

STEPHEN

And we weren't any worse off than other couples . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

I believe that.

STEPHEN

Then what in God's name is it all about?

JUDGE STURGIS

You both belong to a profoundly silly generation, Stephen. I think that's what it's all about and the point is to keep your head. . . .

RUSH

And not be weak.

STEPHEN

Shut up. Go on, Judge.

JUDGE STURGIS

That's all I came to say. We lawyers see so much of this these days, don't we? And it's always the same story. You young people begin by getting ideas about yourselves. Then you get grievances because the ideas don't pan out. Pretty soon you've got nothing *but* grievances. Then bewilderment sets in and you rush to what looks like the only way out.

STEPHEN

I'm not rushing at anything. I want Hope back.

JUDGE STURGIS

Then keep your head when you see her! Remember she's a woman of these days. Caught up in all that means. Swept along with it. The least bit drunk on it.

STEPHEN

The trouble with women these days is . . .

RUSH

That they don't have enough to do.

STEPHEN

No! They've got their freedom too suddenly. That's the trouble.

JUDGE STURGIS

Perhaps. But those golden axioms aren't going to help you now that Hope's taken the big step. What you need is patience and self-control and character and things aren't going to be easy for you.

STEPHEN

I know that. Men in my fix always look damn silly.

JUDGE STURGIS

[*With deep feeling*]: Yes, but nothing matters. Only to save your marriage from the rocks. Hope's my godchild. You've been in my office since you came out of Harvard. I'm fond of both of you and somehow I can't learn to be cynical about marriage.

STEPHEN

Neither can I, Judge, and I promise you . . .

RUSH

Now, just a minute! Just a minute before you commit yourself! You ought to thank Hope for what she's done today. [STEPHEN *looks at him in amazement.*] That's what I said. Marriage is the woman's game these days and we're fools to get into it and lucky to get out and keep our health. I'm not being cynical, Judge. I'm speaking as one who's been both in and out twice each way and what I say to Steve is . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Stern but still humorous*]: Young man, I'm strongly of the opinion that most people who run marriage down are either frivolous or defective.

RUSH

I resent both those adjectives, Judge Sturgis!

JUDGE STURGIS

You have my full permission to resent 'em. Marriage is going on for all of your ideas. It's going on just as long as men and women are capable of the good taste, reserve, adaptability and humor which are the essentials of civilized living. And, in spite of the looks of the age we live in, there are still plenty of men and women who set those important qualities ahead of their own egotism. Nobody says marriage is perfect. With all its faults, though, it remains the best test of the human character yet invented. Yes, and the only compromise civilization has ever put over on embryology.

RUSH

Well, I want you to have it!

STEPHEN

Oh, for God's sake, Rush!

RUSH

I mean it! The *only* compromise! [*He turns to* JUDGE STURGIS.] How about birth control?

JUDGE STURGIS

I'm much too old to be interested in that. [*He turns* to STEPHEN as HELENA *enters. She is getting on for forty saltily and with the most casual and disarming warmth. She is a woman of real distinction, high standards and considerable worldly intelligence and her feet are planted solidly on the earth.*] Stephen . . .

HELENA

[*As she enters, interrupting* JUDGE STURGIS]: *This* is a pretty business, Stephen.

STEPHEN

How did you get in?

HELENA

My little sister has still got her key. [HOPE *enters. She wears a smart street costume and a hat. She is pale and holds herself rigidly in control.*]

STEPHEN

[*Springing toward her*]: Hope!

HOPE

[*From behind plate glass*]: I haven't come back.

HELENA

How do you know he wants you back?

RUSH

[*Shaking hands*]: How are you, Mrs. Grey?

HELENA

I suppose you've been having a man to man talk with Stephen? Well, I've had quite a day with the other side. [*To* STEPHEN]: Thanks, I'd love a cocktail. [*From staring piteously at* HOPE, STEPHEN *turns to filling a glass from the shaker.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

I'll be going, Stephen.

HOPE

Godfather!

JUDGE STURGIS

No, Hope dear. I've said my say to Stephen. [*He pats her hand.*] Be a good girl, won't you? [*To* STEPHEN]: I can let myself out.

STEPHEN

Thanks for coming, Judge.

JUDGE STURGIS

Oh! [*He goes.*]

HELENA

She's at the Plaza, Stephen, very comfortable in lovely rooms looking over the Park and the children are with her all at your expense. That disposes of the preliminaries. [STEPHEN *hands her her cocktail and gives another to* HOPE.] Thank you.

STEPHEN

I'm afraid it may be a bit watery.

HELENA

You look on the watery side yourself. Hope's cried till she's ruined the Plaza ceilings for three floors down. Women cry so when they leave their husbands, I don't see why they do it! Kind of emotional castor oil, I expect.

STEPHEN

For God's sake, Helena!

HELENA

Am I offending your sensibilities? Well, don't snarl at me. I *have* dragged Hope here to make her face the music and act like a sport about this.

HOPE

Steve thinks women haven't got any sense of sportsmanship.

HELENA

They wouldn't be where they are today if they had. [*To* STEPHEN]: Well, I've heard Hope's story, Stephen. I don't take much stock in it. But it's gospel truth to her so we may as well accept it at face value. At that, I believe things can be patched up. There's one factor very much in your favor.

STEPHEN

What is it?

HELENA

Why that you're two normal young people who happen to be strongly attracted to each other sexually.

STEPHEN

Now what's the good of putting it that way!

HELENA

Please don't go prudish on us, Stephen!

RUSH

Sexual attraction does play an important part in marriage, Steve. [*All eyes turn wonderingly toward him.*] Sorry. Go on.

HELENA

Hope, of course, has a high opinion of her personal powers and what she might be doing with 'em if she weren't married. Most women get that way at times. They suspect they may be missing something and

they get that way. I think delusions of grandeur would be your chief trouble.

STEPHEN

Have you heard what Elihu Root said about me?

RUSH

Let it pass, Steve. Let it pass.

STEPHEN

Right.

HELENA

What I came to say is that it's much more trouble to be divorced than married; that it's much better form to stay married than be divorced; and that you and Hope oughtn't to separate anyway.

STEPHEN

I won't argue that.

HELENA

Hope may.

RUSH

Ah! There you have it!

STEPHEN

What?

RUSH

The old war of the sexes. [*General irritation.*] Sorry! Go on.

HELENA

Even if you didn't love each other, you need each other.

STEPHEN

I think we do.

HELENA

Hope needs you for security and a background.

HOPE

I deny it.

HELENA

Ten years ago I divorced my husband for being unfaithful to me. If I'd had the sense then that I've got now I should have found a way to keep him. I've learned the difference between being comfortably supported and rustling for oneself.

HOPE

I consider that a materialistic point of view.

HELENA

Wings are grand things, little sister, but never speak lightly of security.

STEPHEN

Stick to your point.

HELENA

And you need Hope because you'd be quite insignificant without her.

STEPHEN

Helena, you're the most infuriating woman!

RUSH

Shirt!

HELENA

[*To* RUSH]: Thank you so much. [*To* STEPHEN]: Remember your manners, Stephen, or Auntie spank!

STEPHEN

If you had any constructive suggestions to offer.

HELENA

Constructive suggestions? Oh, men! Well, now you speak of it, I've already done your marriage the best possible turn.

STEPHEN

I'll bet you have.

HELENA

I have! You see, I believe in treating these smash-ups precisely as doctors treat ambulance cases. And the first thing is to lay the victims out and give 'em air.

RUSH

Hot air.

HELENA

Can nothing cure this man of being witty?

STEPHEN

Shut up.

RUSH

I only want her to know I'm on your side.

STEPHEN

Shut up anyway. [*To* HELENA *grimly*]: Just what is this good turn you've done?

HELENA

By air, I mean opportunity. To try experiments. To get rid of delusions. And that's what you and Hope both need. Hope wants her own life separate from yours. Well, let her try it and see how she likes it. As for you . . .

STEPHEN

If you don't tell me what you've done I'll strangle you!

HELENA

I'd rather expect you to when I do tell you. I've taken Hope into my business.

STEPHEN

You haven't!

HELENA

I'm making a bookseller of her.

STEPHEN

You're what!

HELENA

Don't strike me!

STEPHEN

But I've got nothing against that! I don't mind that at all! I'm perfectly delighted!

HELENA

Don't tell me!

STEPHEN

I am! I've always said and I always shall say . . .

RUSH

That women don't have enough to do.

STEPHEN

No! [*He glares at* RUSH.] That wives ought to have jobs and outside interests and . . . [*To* HOPE]: Haven't I said that, Hope?

HELENA

Well, I'll say I think you're taking this extremely well.

RUSH

Want to know what I think?

HELENA

What do you think?

RUSH

I think it's all a British plot.

STEPHEN

I've heard enough from you!

HOPE

I've heard enough from all of you! I'm the only one who's got anything real to say to Steve and I'm going to say it without cooperation. Rush, will you please take my sister down to her car?

HELENA

[*Rising*]: Mr. Bigelow?

RUSH

[*To* STEPHEN]: You're not going to be weak?

HELENA

Go on! Let him be weak!

RUSH

I believe you're just an old-fashioned girl, after all!

HELENA

Bryn Mawr 1911. [*They are going.*]

HOPE

Before you go, though, I want you both to hear me say that, with all his faults, Steve is a great man!

STEPHEN

Don't kid me, Hope!

HOPE

I'm not kidding you! You're the greatest man I've ever known. [HELENA *and* RUSH *steal out.*] Except

my father. And he died so long ago I can't remember him. Just the same I've been so horribly unhappy with you that I couldn't, I simply couldn't endure things any longer. So this had to come and I hope you're going to be nice about it.

STEPHEN

Nice about it! . . . [*Afraid to say it*]: Have you . . . Have you got over loving me?

HOPE

I think I must have.

STEPHEN

Then all that Helena just said about sex attraction was all bunk?

HOPE

I think it must be. [*This hurts.*] Oh, please don't wince that way! If you wince I'll have to tell you lies to spare you! I'm so mixed up I don't know whether I love you or not! I only know I've been wretched for weeks and weeks!

STEPHEN

This hasn't been going on for weeks and weeks!

HOPE

Yes, it has, Steve! For weeks and weeks!

STEPHEN

But that adds up to months!

HOPE

I know it does. So I don't believe I can love you any more.

STEPHEN

You used to be happy with me!

HOPE

[*With the utmost of passionate intensity*]: I loved you then. I wish you knew how I've prayed for something, anything, to make me love you in that old way again! I've even thought: if only he'd get pneumonia and nearly die! I did have one hopeful moment when you were threatened with appendicitis! But you cured that with your lemon juice. You did for our marriage with your damn lemon juice, Steve! And now . . . Well, when a woman stops loving her husband and can't be happy with him, there's only one thing for her to do, isn't there?

STEPHEN

But are you sure, Hope? Aren't you, perhaps, just missing the first ecstasy? Ecstasy can't go on forever, you know! Can't you see that something much more important, much more real takes the place of ecstasy!

HOPE

What?

STEPHEN

Well, companionship. Mutual understanding. Peace. I dunno. It sounds flat if you give it a name. Maybe it's marriage. Yes. That's what it is! Real marriage!

HOPE

Marriage! You called it a hell of an institution.

STEPHEN

I was wrong. Listen, Hope! We've forgotten the hard times we had at the begnining. Can't we forget the ecstasy, too? And just . . . just go along?

HOPE

No! That's revolting!

STEPHEN

You ask too much of life.

HOPE

Is happiness too much to ask?

STEPHEN

But I'm blessed if I can think what I've done to make you unhappy! After all I didn't want to go out last night and you did say you'd paid the gas bill!

HOPE

Just like an elephant, you are, the way you bring up grudges!

STEPHEN

But what *is* the matter? If you were in love with another man . . .

HOPE

I'm not . . . At least, not yet.

STEPHEN

So that's it! Love affairs! One man after another!

HOPE

Go on! Call me harsh names!

STEPHEN

No. You're the mother of my children. I'll say no more. [*Pause, then*]: Damn it! We'll get nowhere if we start scrapping. I want to understand, that's all. Anything's bearable if you understand it.

HOPE

I want you to understand. I couldn't clear out, as I've got to do, Steve, and leave you wondering . . .

STEPHEN

You *don't* have to!

HOPE

I do! Would I have gone this far if I didn't? I know I'm wrecking your life. But then I'm chucking everything *I* hold dear. Don't think I'm not going to

miss you. And all this. And even . . . Even your damn movies that always bored me so. I'm sorry to have to tell you, but they did. I'd hang on if I could. But I can't!

STEPHEN

I've been happy with you. I've had a grand time. You ought to have been happy enough with me.

HOPE

That doesn't follow.

STEPHEN

I don't see why not!

HOPE

A time comes when a woman simply has to think of herself. I've got my right to my place in the sun. I've got to get my place before it's too late.

STEPHEN

Too late?

HOPE

I can't sit by any longer and watch my life slipping away!

STEPHEN

Slipping away?

HOPE

Slipping away! Into Limbo!

STEPHEN

What's Limbo?

HOPE

Never mind. I'm not going to waste what little youth I've got left on gas bills and sending your dinner coat out to be pressed! I'm not going to be tied down any longer.

STEPHEN

But you needn't be tied down! You've got a job, now! You've got your own life.

HOPE

It wouldn't work!

STEPHEN

Why wouldn't it?

HOPE

You'd spoil it!

STEPHEN

I would not!

HOPE

You couldn't help it! Husbands spoil everything! You don't know what husbands do to a woman!

STEPHEN

What do they do?

HOPE

They clump and clump and clump on her life till she goes mad!

STEPHEN

Hope, you can't mean that!

HOPE

I suppose I really mean I'm fed up on being married! I don't say that I want a divorce. I don't say I may not come back to you. But I'm going to live my own life for the present.

STEPHEN

Oh, think what you're doing, darling!

HOPE

I can't think any more!

STEPHEN

You've got to! Please! Before it's too late! My darling! Eight years ago, when I asked you to marry me, what did I mean? Only that I loved and wanted you? No! Ten thousand times more than that! I meant: here I am with all my good qualities and bad. I hadn't an idea what I might amount to, but whatever it was, I offered it to you. I offered you all my dreams of what life might hold for me and all my notions of what might be made of me. I offered you my usefulness to serve you, my strength to shield you, my faults for you to tolerate or correct. You can't throw what I offered you away. You can't leave me bankrupt of all my dreams!

HOPE

When I married you, what did I do? [*Loftily quoting G.B.S. at his worst*]: "I gave you the whole sun

and the stars to play with!" [*Then*]: What have you done with them?

STEPHEN

I've given you three human lives to play with. What are you doing with them?

HOPE

[*Shaken*]: I'm very fond of my three human lives, Steve.

STEPHEN

Why, then? Why?

HOPE

I don't know! Oh, I don't know!

STEPHEN

Won't you give me another chance? I'll sleep in the guest room and you can have our room to yourself!

HOPE

[*Touched*]: Steve!

STEPHEN

If only you won't walk out that door! If you do, Hope, you'll take all the point out of my life! You'll take my life through that door with you!

HOPE

[*Melting*]: I don't want to make you suffer, darling Steve! I'm not callous! You know I can't bear to see even a trout suffer!

STEPHEN

Ah, now you're talking like my Hope again!

HOPE

[*Drawing back*]: *Your* Hope?

STEPHEN

I'll send down to the Plaza for the children . .

HOPE

Your Hope, you said . . .

STEPHEN

Darling . . .

HOPE

I'm *my* Hope! My own Hope!

STEPHEN

I didn't mean . . .

HOPE

Yes, you did mean!

STEPHEN

[*Trying to take her in his arms*]: I didn't! I'll do anything! I'll promise . . .

HOPE

Let me go! [*She breaks for the entry.*]

STEPHEN

[*Following*]: Hope! Think what Helena just said! We *do* need each other!

HOPE

[*Turning*]: I don't need anyone! I'm never going to let myself need anyone again! [*She goes into the entry. He follows her.*]

STEPHEN

[*Off-stage*]: But I need you!

[*The door slams. In a moment* STEPHEN *comes back into the room. He stands, the picture of dumb misery. Absently, he lights a cigarette. He goes wearily toward a chair and is about to sit. But his eye is caught by the motion picture projector. He stares at it a moment while an idea forms in his addled brain. Then he goes over to it. A reel of film is lying beside it. He begins to adjust matters.* RUSH *returns.*]

RUSH

I left the door on the latch when I went down. I thought things would be bad. Of course, if you'd rather be alone . . .

STEPHEN

[*Completely concentrated on the projector*]: No.

RUSH

Good. Then you're coming out with me to get the tightest you've ever been in your whole life.

STEPHEN

[*Still not turning*]: Am I?

RUSH

Yes, *sir*. And we'll begin right now. Where's the Scotch?

STEPHEN

[*Still not turning*]: In there with the rest. [*He does not even glance toward the liquor cabinet. He is too intent on the projector.* RUSH *finds the Scotch.*]

RUSH

Get tight. Get good and tight. Then tell 'em all to go to hell. That's my prescription. [*He finds the syphon and glasses.*] Ah, *and* the soda! [STEPHEN *turns out the lights.*] Hey! Turn on those lights!

STEPHEN

Just a minute. There's a reel on here I want to see. [*His image and* HOPE'S *appear in cinematograph reproduction on the light walls of the room. They are both dressed in outing costumes.*] Look!

RUSH

You and Hope. Where's the corkscrew?

STEPHEN

In the Yellowstone. See that thing behind us? That's old Faithful. Watch her, now! [*The shot changes to one of Old Faithful.*] She's just getting ready to erupt. [*Old Faithful erupts.*] There she goes! [*His voice chokes with grief.*] Good Old Faithful! (*Old Faithful continues to erupt.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE THIRD SCENE

Dr. Mannering's Office in the East Sixties of New York. It is a room of the luxurious submarine type affected by successful practitioners whose patients are women of wealth and quality. It is furnished to star Dr. Mannering at his desk. A door gives on the waiting room and the late afternoon sun streams through the window. It is the day following the preceding scene.

[HOPE *sits at* DR. MANNERING'S *desk in the full sun.* DR. MANNERING, *in his own chair opposite her, sits in shadow. This is an essential of his psychoanalytic technique. It gives his patients the impression that they are being studied and it adds mystery to the analyst. When* DR. MANNERING *has some important point to emphasize he leans forward so that his head is enveloped in a Stokowski radiance of sunshine. His manner with* HOPE *is just a shade too sympathetic and he has not quite got rid of his last traces of Jewish accent.*]

HOPE

You think I did right to leave him yesterday?

DR. MANNERING

What our feeling dictates is the only right we consider here.

HOPE

Dear Dr. Mannering! That's very comforting! There's only one thing that still troubles me.

DR. MANNERING

Tell me.

HOPE

I miss him so already.

DR. MANNERING

I shouldn't let that trouble me!

HOPE

It's all so complicated it almost makes me wish I were just an ordinary woman instead of an intuitive introvert.

DR. MANNERING

Dear lady!

HOPE

Oh, I don't mean to sound ungrateful! Why, I think women ought to go down on their knees to Freud and Jung! I know that if I hadn't been able to talk to you as I have these dreadful past six weeks, I should have gone mad and killed myself just to relieve my feelings! I think I'll tell you something more about myself.

DR. MANNERING

Another dream? [*He rises to fetch a box of cigarettes.*]

HOPE

No. More self-revelation. You see, since I've taken up being ego-conscious, a whole new world has opened out before me.

DR. MANNERING

Of course! [*He offers* HOPE *a cigarette. She takes one.*]

HOPE

Yes. I've begun noticing my evil impulses. Doctor, I'd no idea I had so many!

DR. MANNERING

Ah, the sinister independence of the subconscious!

HOPE

Isn't it thrilling! It makes me wonder if I'm not rather a wicked woman. Destroying men just for the fun of it. Like Hedda Gabler.

DR. MANNERING

[*He is holding the lighter in his hand waiting for her to finish*]: How well I understand!

HOPE

At other times I seem just weak and feminine. Less like Hedda and more like Mary Queen of Scots.

DR. MANNERING

Dear lady! Remember! We strive through self-knowledge to live in harmony with ourselves.

HOPE

Oh, I'm striving. [*She permits him to light her cigarette. He lights his own as she continues.*] I'd *like* to live in harmony with Steve, too. At least I think I should. In a way I want to go back to him. But, in another way, I don't want to one bit. I don't believe I know what I really want. I'll find out, though, if I keep at it, won't I?

DR. MANNERING

The imago has become clouded by a too vigorous projection of the anima and the subconscious rising in irresistible revolt the consciousness can function only in confusion. But distance will clarify, the adaptation to reality will follow and the stream of the libido will flow on. Yes. [*The dictaphone of his desk clicks. He returns to his desk.*] Excuse me.

HOPE

You find me an interesting case, don't you, doctor?

DR. MANNERING

A most interesting case, Mrs. Ferrier.

HOPE

I'm glad.

DR. MANNERING

[*Into the apparatus*): Yes?

HOPE

[*She carries on in spite of the unintelligible remarks made by the dictaphone*]: If only there were some way for you to help Steve as you've helped me. Not that *he* doesn't live in harmony with himself. He rather overdoes that part. But . . .

DR. MANNERING

[*Not entirely pleased by what the dictaphone has told him*]: You weren't expecting your husband here this afternoon?

HOPE

Expecting Steve? He doesn't even know about you!

DR. MANNERING

Mrs. Ferrier! Do you mean to say that you've been coming here all this time without telling him?

HOPE

All this is miles over poor Steve's head!

DR. MANNERING

You should have told him. I find myself the least bit embarrassed. He's in the waiting room.

HOPE

Is he spying on me?

DR. MANNERING

I sent him a bill.

HOPE

You didn't!

DR. MANNERING

Oh, it's quite usual for doctors to send bills.

HOPE

Yes. But if there's one thing Steve detests it's a sudden bill. I'd better go.

DR. MANNERING

Just a minute. Let me think just a minute. No. You'd much better stay. This may be my opportunity to help him.

HOPE

Oh, Doctor!

DR. MANNERING

Yes. Just sit where you are. [*He goes to the waiting room door and opens it.*] Come in, Mr. Ferrier. [STEPHEN *enters depressed and suspicious.*]

STEPHEN

Dr. Mannering? [*Then he sees Hope.*] Hullo, Hope!

HOPE

[*Uneasy*]: How are you, Steve?

STEPHEN

I'm all right. I didn't expect to find you here.

DR. MANNERING

[*So warmly*]: No? Well, sit down, Mr. Ferrier, and let's chat together like three friends. I'm happy indeed to meet you. In cases of this sort the analyst should always know both husband and wife . . .

STEPHEN

Yeah?

DR. MANNERING

It's even desirable for him to work with both simultaneously, if possible, so that neither will attain consciousness before the other. [*He is back at his desk seating* STEPHEN.] Sit down. Sit down. Of course serious analysis may not be possible for you but a friendly chat can't do any harm, may, even, prove beneficial. Yes. As you doubtless know, modern science is teaching us to look on marriage as a psychological relationship pure and simple. Well, not so simple, perhaps. No. But, as Jung himself says: no psychological relationship is possible between two people who are not in a state of consciousness. Of course he means psychological consciousness. Ego-consciousness we call it. Yes.

STEPHEN

I didn't come here to talk about marriage. I came about your bill.

HOPE

Steve! You're not going to bicker about a little bill?

STEPHEN

Eight hundred berries is not little. The biggest doctor's bill I ever paid was five hundred and I got a baby for that. I'd like to know what I'm getting for eight hundred.

HOPE

You may get a wife.

STEPHEN

Yesterday, when you left me, I couldn't make out what this was all about. When I found that you'd been coming here, though . . .

DR. MANNERING

Are you implying . . . ?

HOPE

I've put our future in Dr. Mannering's hands, Steve. So be very careful what you say.

STEPHEN

I've no intention of saying anything. [*He turns to Dr. Mannering.*] You see, Doctor, marriages strike me as things of feeling. Not to be talked about, you know. Just . . .

HOPE

But you don't get the idea at all! Talking's the whole secret of being analysed. You talk. He listens. Presently the miracle happens and there you are ego-

conscious. It's a devastating experience, of course, but not at all unpleasant.

STEPHEN

Ego-conscious. That's something else again from not being asleep?

HOPE

It has nothing to do with sleeping!

STEPHEN

I was going to say!

DR. MANNERING

I'm sorry you've come here in this frame of mind. I think I could help you.

HOPE

Let him try, Steve! All you have to do is sit there. Just sit there and listen while he explains my psychology.

STEPHEN

Oh, for God's sake!

HOPE

[*Blazing*]: Now listen to me, Steve Ferrier! I've found out a great deal about my psychology that you'd be surprised to hear! I guess you don't know that I've found out that I think every married woman should have a lover. Yes, and have children by him, if she wants to. And I think it's about time husbands got

over their silly, possessive prejudices. And I think . . . Well, that's enough for now.

STEPHEN

Are these the ideas you put in your patients' heads?

DR. MANNERING

They're the ideas my patients put in mine. They're the ideas of the age we live in.

STEPHEN

Well, they're what I call damn dangerous stuff! [*He rises and strides about the room in his agitation.*] Feminism! Call it what it is! Call it a lot of irresponsible, grasping, fat-headed females wanting the earth and getting it, by God, with no strings attached!

HOPE

We're no worse than the British Empire used to be.

STEPHEN

[*Regarding her darkly*]: If I had any sense I'd get out and stay out.

HOPE

[*A little uncertain*]: Don't be absurd!

STEPHEN

I'm not being absurd! You know there's nothing I wouldn't do to get you back. But I can't make out where I'm at with you!

HOPE

Tell him, Doctor! Tell him all about the range of my personality and how passionate my nature is!

DR. MANNERING

Please! [*A pause, then*]: Of course, you don't know where you're at, Mr. Ferrier. You still think of marriage as authority for the husband and subordination for the wife. You don't realize that you're living through one of the greatest revolutions in all history.

HOPE

[*Making it clear*]: He means the revolt of woman.

DR. MANNERING

Exactly. And your wife isn't alone in this. She's one of thousands upon thousands of women who are finding traditional marriage a bankrupt institution and are struggling toward the freedom of a new marriage which will be a true partnership in the citizenship of life.

HOPE

Oh, Doctor! That's too, too marvellous!

STEPHEN

[*To* HOPE]: Sure! That's fine! That's great! And it's my idea exactly! Only I never have understood what kick you had.

HOPE

Well, I could give you a few rough notes on that.

DR. MANNERING

If you understood yourself, Mr. Ferrier, you might be less puzzled by your wife.

STEPHEN

I shouldn't want to get sore, Doctor!

DR. MANNERING

I've no desire to make you sore. But I'm confident that I know many things about you that you don't know yourself and ought to know.

STEPHEN

All right. Let's have the story of my life.

DR. MANNERING

I don't pretend to say whether you went to Yale or Princeton.

STEPHEN

[*Dangerous at once*]: Do I look like a Princeton man?

DR. MANNERING

You look like a man who's matured very little since he left college.

STEPHEN

Do you know what Elihu Root said about me?

DR. MANNERING

Aren't you rather apt to act like a spoiled child at times?

STEPHEN

Well, I'll be damned!

DR. MANNERING

I thought so. And your wife. To you she's many things. The mother of your children. The companion of your evenings. The chief advertisement of your success. Almost anything, in fact, except the person that she really is.

STEPHEN

Who do you think you're talking to?

DR. MANNERING

To the best type of American husband. A nice chap. Rather trying to be married to.

STEPHEN

[*To* HOPE]: Are these the things you've been saying about me?

HOPE

[*Licking the cream off her whiskers*]: Husbands never suspect that their wives see through them, Steve.

STEPHEN

I'm certainly seeing through you, now! Coming here! Slandering me behind my back! Expecting me to pay

this man for telling you what a flat tire I am! That may be your idea of sportsmanship but it's not mine!

HOPE

Sportsmanship again?

STEPHEN

Well, common gratitude, if you like that better.

HOPE

[*Working herself up for a big aria of self-justification*]: What have I got to be grateful to you for?

STEPHEN

Hope!

HOPE

Well, what? You took me away from a big house where I had everything and every one took care of me. You put me in a dreary flat with one maid and thirty dollars a week to run the house on.

STEPHEN

It was all I could afford! Lately, though . . .

HOPE

[*Crescendo*]: We've lived in a better flat lately and we've had two maids and a nurse to mind the children. But I've still had to do no end of things I wasn't ever meant to do.

STEPHEN

You did 'em for our home!

HOPE

For your home! It doesn't mean much to me when I look back on the gay, carefree girl I was before . . .

STEPHEN

Don't say such things!

HOPE

Or when I think of what I might be now if only . . .

STEPHEN

If what?

HOPE

If you hadn't used me and debased me as you have!

STEPHEN

It isn't true!

HOPE

I who am so much finer than you are! So much more sensitive! So . . .

STEPHEN

I know, Hope! I know! But, just the same!

HOPE

[*Fortissimo*]: What have you given me to make up for what you've had from me?

STEPHEN

I've given you everything you ever asked for!

HOPE

What makes you think I wanted what you had to give?

STEPHEN

You always took it!

HOPE

I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

STEPHEN

This is the hell of an age to be a man in!

HOPE

It's a wonderful age to be a woman in!

STEPHEN

[*He sits dismayed*]: I never expected anything like this. I always tried to do my job. I always did the best I knew how. A man can't do any more than that. I dunno what the answer is.

DR. MANNERING

Self-knowledge. Understanding. Consciousness.

STEPHEN

You're not going to get me for a patient.

DR. MANNERING

I'm sincerely sorry. And I wish you wouldn't scoff.

STEPHEN

[*Desperate*]: I'm not scoffing! I don't know what it's all about! Women these days expect more than men ever dreamed of! [*Swinging on* HOPE]: You! If you had to do on the freedom I'm allowed you'd know what it *is* to wear a ball and chain!

DR. MANNERING

By freeing your wife, you'll free yourself from her.

STEPHEN

Whatever that means!

DR. MANNERING

The new marriage! The true partnership!

STEPHEN

Oh, applesauce!

HOPE

Don't you want me back?

STEPHEN

Yes, God help me! [*He clutches his head in an agony of bewilderment. Suddenly the real* HOPE *breaks through. Her hand reaches out to him. A gesture from* DR. MANNERING *comes just in time. She controls her impulse. Then*]:

HOPE

You'd much better let Dr. Mannering help you.

DR. MANNERING

As I said, I should be happy.

STEPHEN

[*He looks up slowly.*] Will you come home with me if I do?

HOPE

Well, I don't know . . . I only left you yesterday . . . Still, if I could be free to come and go as I like . . . when and how I like . . . with whom I like . . . and no questions asked . . .

STEPHEN

Not lovers! I couldn't stand for lovers!

HOPE

[*Outraged dignity not quite sincere*]: I shouldn't dream of such a thing!

STEPHEN

All right. I'll stick your label FREE on you. [*He executes the pantomime of sticking.*] There. It's stuck.

HOPE

[*A smile. Then she turns, well-pleased, to Dr. Mannering.*] Good-by, dear Dr. Mannering. [DR. MANNERING *rises as they go out.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FOURTH SCENE

The backroom of HELENA'S *bookshop in a converted brownstone of the East Forties of New York. Every piece of furniture grouped about the marble Victorian mantel and its glowing coal grate is attuned to the rare books on their shelves in their bindings of old calf and vellum. The treasury of the rarest volumes is protected by locked glass doors. Specimens of the finest modern presses lie on a long table: the quartos in two considerable piles, the octavos between simple bookends. Other essentials are a tea table near the fire and a desk near the window. An arch, partly closed by a most lovely and simple screen, gives on the front room in which is the main shop. The alcohol lamp is burning under the tea kettle on the tea table. A lamp illuminates* HELENA'S *desk. Late afternoon some weeks after the preceding scene.*

HELENA *sits working at her desk, checking an order from a catalogue.* STEPHEN *drinks tea morosely in a chair by the fire.*

HELENA

[*So engrossed she does not know she is talking to herself*]: Florio's Montaigne . . . No . . . The None-

such Pilgrim's Progress . . . Yes, I should think so . . . My God, what prices! [*In her irritation she reaches for a cigarette from the box on her desk. Just at that moment,* Stephen *rises and goes to the tea table for another cup of tea. While she is lighting her cigarette, she watches him. Then*]: Stephen! [*Startled,* Stephen *turns.*] Spill it.

Stephen

[*Pause, then*]: I've got nothing to spill.

Helena

No man drinks five cups of tea unless he's pretty low in his mind. [*Pause. Their eyes meet.*] Hate sympathy, don't you!

Stephen

Don't need it.

Helena

Good boy, Stephen! [Stephen *puts down his cup and goes quickly over to her.*]

Stephen

[*The load crashing from his chest.*] You think a woman's got time to lead her own life and have a home both, don't you?

Helena

If she's got enough sense of relative importance to swing both, yes.

STEPHEN

That's the weak spot, isn't it! I mean, if the home's got children in it who need their mother. You know, a man doesn't want his children brought up by servants altogether! The technical part, yes! You've got to hire experts for that. But there are influences hired people can't supply and examples they can't be expected to set. And the husband, too! He wants things when he comes home from a hard day's work.

HELENA

Hope's working something out. She'll come through all right because she's all right.

STEPHEN

[*Rattled*]: I wasn't thinking of Hope! I was just making conversation on a timely topic! [*Their eyes meet. His fall.*] I'm sorry I said anything. It was damn bad taste.

HELENA

I'm sorry you're still having troubles.

STEPHEN

It's puzzling, that's all. It's lonely as hell. And cold. It's not life. Life's warm. There's blood in life. Not only in your body. All through everything. You know. [*He rises embarrassed.*] I guess I won't wait for Hope. I guess I'll go around to the Racquet and pick up a game of squash. That'll go me good.

HELENA

[*Rising*]: Come in for tea again?

STEPHEN

You're a great dear, Helena.

HELENA

So are you, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Oh, I'm a pet! [*He is shaking hands with her. The shadow comes back over his face. In a low, savage tone he adds*]: When I think of that goddamn psychoanalyst telling her she's an intuitive introvert!

HELENA

Now . . . Now . . .

STEPHEN

He's at the bottom of all this.

HELENA

He's just the mouthpiece of the mob, these days.

STEPHEN

He told me I was an infantile extravert and that's the hell of a thing to call a man! [*Once again he pulls himself up.*] There I go again! [*Shamefacedly he gets his hat and coat.*] Will you ask Hope to phone if she's not coming home to dinner?

HELENA

I'll ask her.

STEPHEN

Thanks. I . . . [*He changes his mind.*] I can let myself out. [*He goes. She stands watching him. The door of the outer shop closes off-stage.*]

HELENA

Poor old Stephen! [*Suddenly she seems to grow very angry. She goes quickly to the tea table and begins setting it in order with unnecessary vigor. She is just bending over to blow out the lamp under the kettle when a sound in the outer shop pulls her up.*]

RUSH

[*Off-stage*]: Hold that door, Hope! My God, they weigh enough! [*A crash.*]

HOPE

[*Off-stage*]: It's all right. They won't break. Bring the loose ones in here.

RUSH

[*Off-stage*]: The loose ones! [HOPE *enters very smartly turned out.*]

HOPE

Hullo, Helena! You still here? [RUSH *follows her almost completely hidden behind a staggering load of very large books.*]

HOPE

It took forever! You know what the customs are! [RUSH *just makes the table, gets his load on it and sighs audibly.*] Those are the new Ashendeans. They're simply divine. There was no trouble about them. Rush had his car so we didn't bother to pack 'em again. On the old lot we had to go over every title. That's what took the time. [*She is conscious of a coldness in Helena's manner.*] Anything wrong?

HELENA

There weren't so many in the old lot. It shouldn't have taken so very long.

HOPE

[*Just the fraction of a pause, then*]: Well, it did.

HELENA

What time did you finish lunch? [HOPE *stiffens but does not answer.*] Weren't you lunching together again today? [RUSH *grows uneasy.*]

HOPE

[*Another pause, then*]: What if we were?

HELENA

[*Pause, then*]: Where *is* the old lot. I'll have a look at 'em.

HOPE

What do we do, Helena? Stand in a corner?

HELENA

Have you done anything to stand in a corner for?

HOPE

[*Blazing inside*]: The old lot's out there in the shop. They were the crash you heard.

HELENA

[*Meeting her eyes without the least difficulty*]: Will you hand me my scissors, please, Mr. Bigelow?

RUSH

[*Handing the scissors from the desk*]: Won't you let me help unpack 'em?

HELENA

[*Still holding* HOPE's *gaze*]: No thanks. Stephen's been here. He wants you to telephone if you're not dining with him. [*She goes quickly into the outer shop.*]

HOPE

Damn!

RUSH

Cracks, eh?

HOPE

I think you're all trying to drive me crazy! I'll show you!

RUSH

[*Proffering his pack of cigarettes*]: Show me what?

HOPE

I'll show *her*, I mean! [*She is helping herself from* RUSH's *pack.*] No. I don't like your kind. [*She goes to her hand bag for her own and, in the course of the scene, lights one.* RUSH *sticks a specimen of his in his mouth and lights it. The ensuing scene is played by both of them with an acute dramatic consciousness of* HELENA's *presence in the next room. In every pause* HELENA *can be heard unpacking her books there.*]

RUSH

I'd better beat it. I may be dumb but I didn't miss your sister's innuendos.

HOPE

I can make a sentence with that word in it, too! "You opened the door and innuendo!"

RUSH

That isn't a bit funny. It's terrible.

HOPE

[*With sudden whispered violence*]: What if we do lunch and dine together? Whose business is it?

RUSH

Well . . . Steve's.

HOPE

It is not! It's *my* business.

RUSH

I may be old-fashioned, but I always try to do the right thing by my friends.

HOPE

Have you done anything Steve could complain of?

RUSH

No . . . Not yet . . .

HOPE

That sounds promising!

RUSH

There's no good beating about the bush. We both know what these things lead to.

HOPE

You're not planning to assault my virtue?

RUSH

Honestly! The way women talk these days! [*He moves, outraged, toward the tea table. She grins delightedly and sits by* HELENA's *desk, watching him.*] The kettle's boiling.

HOPE

So it seems!

RUSH

No, I mean the real one.

HOPE

I'm not interested in the real one. [RUSH *blows out the alcohol lamp. She proceeds very casually.*] Suppose I were to ask you to take me to Atlantic City over Sunday?

RUSH

Please don't.

HOPE

Why not?

RUSH

Make you look pretty flat if I turned you down.

HOPE

You'd take me.

RUSH

God how I'd regret it!

HOPE

Thanks.

RUSH

It's not that. I'd think of Steve.

HOPE

But you would go.

RUSH

If I did it would only be because I can't have any woman suspecting my virility.

HOPE

Mercy me!

RUSH

Now you've got *me* talking dirty. I hope you're satisfied.

HOPE

I've roused the beast in you anyway.

RUSH

You're a damn forward hussy!

HOPE

My three men!

RUSH

Where?

HOPE

All I've got's a husband.

RUSH

Well, you're not going to sign your Declaration of Independence on this table! [*He smites himself on the chest.*]

HOPE

I never had the least idea of going anywhere with you.

RUSH

Then what made you suggest it?

HOPE

[*Not looking at him*]: I dunno . . . I've always found you so attractive and amusing and *very* good looking and I'm fond of you and I *thought* you were

fond of me . . . And now that Steve and I have made this working agreement . . . That is, I'm living under the same roof with Steve but not as his wife . . . I shouldn't have gone back to him if he hadn't agreed to leave me absolutely free . . . that way . . . Tell me if I'm being too anatomical, won't you?

RUSH

[*Stunned*]: And Steve puts up with that?

HOPE

[*Still not looking at him*]: He can't help himself.

RUSH

[*Drawn over to her*]: I wouldn't put up with it for a minute, Hope.

HOPE

[*Further away than ever*]: Isn't it lucky for me Steve isn't you!

RUSH

[*Very near*]: You're an awful woman!

HOPE

[*Lost in the far distance*]: Am I?

RUSH

[*That kind of a smile, then*]: Let's go to Atlantic City.

HOPE

[*Rising*]: No, thanks.

RUSH

Why not? If Steve hasn't any kick.

HOPE

I don't like Atlantic City.

RUSH

Let's go somewhere else, then!

HOPE

Long Beach or Philadelphia?

RUSH

Does it matter where?

HOPE

Rush! You're so impassioned!

RUSH

Is that a drawback?

HOPE

I'd have to think twice before I did anything like that!

RUSH

Dine with me tonight and we'll think twice together.

HOPE

I promised Steve I'd dine at home.

RUSH

We'll lunch tomorrow. I'll pick you up.

HOPE

You've practically done that already.

RUSH

You're just a great big tease, you are! [HELENA *enters slowly and stands watching.*]

HOPE

Is that all?

RUSH

And you shouldn't put ideas in my head!

HOPE

I get ideas in my own head. [*He is very near.*]

RUSH

Good ideas.

HOPE

Look out, Rush! [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her. It is quite an important kiss.*]

HELENA

Well, the view's pretty but there seems to be something the matter with the plumbing.

HOPE

[*As* RUSH *and she start apart*]: Have you been standing there?

HELENA

And listening in the other room.

RUSH

I'm sorry, Mrs. Grey, but I'm that way and there's no curing me.

HELENA

I'm talking to my sister who's supposed to be housebroke.

HOPE

It was your idea for Steve and me to experiment!

HELENA

You're carrying things a bit further than I expected.

HOPE

You can't experiment if you don't *try* something now and then! You can have back your job! They want me to come on Vogue! I'll go on Vogue tomorrow morning!

HELENA

By all means do, you little fool!

HOPE

I'll show you! I'll show everybody! I'll . . . [STEPHEN *returns.*]

STEPHEN

I couldn't get a game so I thought I'd . . . What's going on?

HELENA

Just Hope. She's chucking her job with me and going to Vogue. [*She turns back to setting the tea table to rights.*]

HOPE

[*Showing her*]: We've had an argument, Steve. A woman's argument. About fidelity in marriage. [HELENA *turns frowning to stop her but she won't be stopped.*] Helena won't believe that you and I've agreed it's not important.

STEPHEN

[*Startled*]: Did you tell Helena that?

HOPE

I'm telling her now. Have you any objections?

STEPHEN

I certainly have!

HOPE

We did agree, didn't we?

STEPHEN

[*Wretchedly embarrassed*]: Why tell the world about it?

HOPE

The world ought to know so it can follow in our footsteps!

STEPHEN

I don't think so!

HELENA

[*The tea pot grasped very firmly*]: You're quite right not to think so. It's filthy bad form to get in the street and frighten the horses!

RUSH

I beg your pardon?

HELENA

And well you may! [*She sets down the tea pot and advances in company front.*] I'm fed to the teeth on the penny dreadful bolshevism you young things go in for these days! Fidelity not important! Other people's feelings not important, I suppose! Loyalty not important! Let me tell you, my dear sister, you need self-discipline a lot more than you need self-expression! [*She turns away toward the book table.*]

HOPE

Really, Helena!

HELENA

Yes, my dear! I've been made very angry this afternoon and you'll all do well to let me blow off steam. Sit down, all of you! (*They glance uneasily at one another and obey. She brings a large volume to* STEPHEN.] Stephen, I'm handing you a volume of Don Quixote. [*English pronunciation, please!*] Printed and published by the Ashendean Press in England. Don't read it. Just let the order of that perfect page seep into the addled remnants of your mind. Order is what we need here for the moment. [*Another volume to* HOPE.] Hope dear, the same for you. The Dove's Press Bible. [*A third volume to* RUSH.] Mr. Bigelow,

the Nonesuch Inferno is your item. [*She surveys them.*] Now, altogether, while I count ten in silence!

RUSH

It says: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!"

HELENA

Quiet! [*Pause, then*]: So. My subject is The Revolt of Women and the Mess It's Making. I take my text, Stephen, from a remark of yours. "Women," you said, "have got no sense of sportsmanship."

STEPHEN

I didn't say quite that.

HELENA

It's my text anyway. [*To* HOPE]: And I'd like to know what you young wives think you're driving at these days! I doubt if you've got much sense of anything but your own self-importance! Have you never heard what it means to keep a bargain? I think it's about time for you and your kind to stop breaking things and settle down! Somewhere! Almost anywhere will do. [*At* STEPHEN]: If you men had the gumption of guinea pigs you'd get busy and put a stop to this revolt of women with a jolly good pogrom!

STEPHEN

Not a pogrom!

RUSH

Why not a pogrom! It's a good idea!

HOPE

I'd be ashamed!

HELENA

[*Riding her down.*] Oh, I'm for men! Men have been trying to civilize themselves. They haven't got far with it, but they've tried. They've at least given birth to the thing called ethics. I know men who take their ethics seriously. I wish I knew more women. Maybe we've got an ethics of our own. Maybe we need a feminine Confucius to dig it out and write it down for us. It won't make pretty reading but it will give the men a chance to see where they stand or where they don't. I'm afraid it's the code to which this country and some others are being rapidly turned over. Perhaps it's the survival of the fittest. Well, if it is, I hope I manage to squeeze through to the Great Beyond before the fittest get complete control. I happen to have a distaste for confusion. To my mind, order . . .

HOPE

[*Scorn*]: Order!

RUSH

[*Sceptical*]: Order?

STEPHEN

[*Nodding*]: Order.

HELENA

Men love women, too. Of course, that's the nigger in the woodpile. Well! I feel better! Are there any questions?

RUSH

[*An uneasy glance at* HOPE's *fury and* STEPHEN's *solemnity, then*]: Well, I'd like all the little children who believe in fairies to stand up and clap their hands.

HELENA

[*A glare for* RUSH, *then*]: Stephen? [*No answer.*] Hope, my dear?

HOPE

I said I'd show you, Helena, and I will. [*She stands, if she is seated, and turns to* RUSH.] I'll go to Atlantic City with you after all!

STEPHEN

What's that?

RUSH

Now keep your shirt on, Steve. [HELENA *watches aloof and amused.*]

HOPE

Free to come and go! That was your bargain!

STEPHEN

I never made any bargain with him! [*To* RUSH]: Do you propose to take my wife to Atlantic City?

RUSH

Well, yes and no.

STEPHEN

Yes and no!

RUSH

Yes and no.

HOPE

Steve, please!

STEPHEN

My best friend! My best MAN! Taking my wife . . .

RUSH

But she's not your wife!

STEPHEN

What do you mean she's not my wife?

RUSH

She told me herself, Steve! That's what I meant by yes and no . . .

STEPHEN

[*Swinging on* HOPE]: What did you tell him?

HOPE

[*Rattled*]: Why, I . . . I simply told him . . . I . . . how things stand between us.

STEPHEN

What!!!

HOPE

I didn't think you'd mind!

STEPHEN

That isn't the sort of thing to tell another man about your husband!

HOPE

I don't see why!

STEPHEN

You didn't think what it would make him think!

HOPE

What could it make him think?

STEPHEN

What do you think it could help making him think?

RUSH

Now, Steve!

STEPHEN

[*To* HOPE]: And what do you think it makes me think of you?

HOPE

All I meant was it's my last chance at love!

STEPHEN

Oh, no! No more, please! I'm through!

HOPE

Through?

STEPHEN

Through for good! I recognized your right to live your life! But I never said you could make me out a eunuch!

HOPE

I didn't do that! You ask Rush . . .

STEPHEN

I will not ask Rush! I made that bargain hoping you'd snap out of this! Now I don't care if you don't snap out!

HOPE

Oh!

STEPHEN

Patience can cease to be a virtue and be just plain ignominious! [*To* RUSH]: As for you, you dirty bastard!

HOPE

[*Wild cries of rage*]: Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

RUSH

[*At the same time*]: Look out, Steve!

STEPHEN

[*Rushing right on*]: You come outside and I'll show you if I'm a eunuch! Where's my hat! Where's my . . . [*He finds it. He turns on* HOPE.] Last time you left me. This time I'm leaving you. If you'll take my advice, you'll get yourself a lawyer! Helena, good-by! [*He goes.*]

RUSH

Call *me* a dirty bastard! [*He goes. Off-stage sounds.* HOPE *paces, raging, to and fro, continuing her inarticulate sounds of rage.*]

HELENA

Well, my dear, you seem to have done it this time. [HELENA *smiles unperturbed.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FIFTH SCENE

A police station in a small town on Long Island. There are three doors. One gives on the street, one on the jail and one on an inner office. It is very early the following morning.

Two officers are on duty. They sit behind the usual wooden rail where the desks are. One of them, a traffic officer, is sleeping on two chairs, his cap pulled over his face to shield his eyes from the harsh overhead lighting. The other sits at the rail immersed in a newspaper. There is a short pause then Hope *enters excitedly from the street and* Judge Sturgis *follows. They are both dressed as for a long motor ride on a cold night. The officer looks up as they walk quickly toward him.*]

Hope

You've got my husband here!

Judge Sturgis

Mr. Ferrier. Mr. Stephen Ferrier. You telephoned there'd been an accident.

Hope

[*Gulping*]: Yes . . . Is he . . . is he badly hurt?

JUDGE STURGIS

Well?

THE OFFICER

No. He was some time comin' to, but I wouldn't say he was hurt bad.

HOPE

[*To* JUDGE STURGIS]: Unconscious! Godfather, he was unconscious! Steve was . . . [*Back to the officer.*] Where is he? Take me to him!

THE OFFICER

[*To* JUDGE STURGIS]: Who are you?

JUDGE STURGIS

Sturgis is my name. I'm Mr. Ferrier's partner.

THE OFFICER

I see. You furnishin' bail?

HOPE

Bail?

JUDGE STURGIS

What's that officer?

HOPE

You haven't arrested him?

THE OFFICER

Certainly we've arrested him!

HOPE

But you can't arrest a man for being hurt in an accident!

THE OFFICER

The charge against him's operatin' a motor vehicle under the influence uh liquor.

HOPE

Oh, no!

THE OFFICER

Yes, it is, lady, and it's lucky for him he didn't hit nothin' more'n a tree because he wasn't feelin' particular.

HOPE

Godfather!

JUDGE STURGIS

Please Hope! [*To the officer*]: Officer, will you let me see the blotter?

THE OFFICER

Sure I will. [*He turns the entry book around. He points to the place.* THE JUDGE *scans it quickly.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

Hm . . . [*He looks up thinking.*]

HOPE

[*To the officer*]: This doesn't sound at all like my husband. If you could show us this man you've got.

THE OFFICER

Sure! [*He goes to the door that gives on the jail and opens it. He calls*]: Come in, Steve! There's folks here to see you. [*A pause. Then* STEPHEN *enters. There is a bruise under his right eye and a plaster above his left. He hangs his head dolorously. He stands by the door.*]

HOPE

Oh!

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Quickly*]: This is the man, officer. I suppose the magistrate's gone home to bed.

THE OFFICER

Oh, long ago! Court opens at . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Producing his wallet*]: If I could see the magistrate myself for a moment, I should think . . . [*He hands the officer a card.*] This is my card.

THE OFFICER

[*He reads the name, then*]: Well, I'm delighted to meet you, Judge! Maybe this could be fixed up. [*To* STEPHEN]: Why didn't you tell me?

JUDGE STURGIS

[*To the officer*]: I could drive around to the magistrate's house and . . .

THE OFFICER

You stay right here where it's warm, Judge, and leave this to me. [*He is getting his overcoat from the hook where it is hanging.*] It won't take ten minutes. [*He calls to the sleeping officer.*] Hey, Waldo!

THE SLEEPING OFFICER

[*Stirring*]: Huh?

THE OFFICER

You're in charge till I get back. [*He goes out.*]

THE SLEEPING OFFICER

Huh. [*He continues sleeping.*]

STEPHEN

[*Low*]: Thank you, Judge.

HOPE

Steve, how could you!

STEPHEN

I dunno. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

JUDGE STURGIS

Now, Hope . . .

HOPE

But look at him! Look at his eyes! Driving drunk, too! And this afternoon he was fighting in the street!

STEPHEN

That's so Judge! I was fighting in the street! They stopped me doing that so I went off by myself and got tight! Got good and tight! Got the tightest I've ever been in my life! Now my name's on the police blotter and I'm a disgrace!

HOPE

How common! God, how common!

STEPHEN

Isn't it!

HOPE

What were you doing 'way out here on Long Island?

STEPHEN

I was on *my* way to Atlantic City, if you know what I mean.

HOPE

I don't know and Atlantic City's on the other side of New York and you're not in any position to be cryptic.

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Stepping between them*]: I quite agree, Hope. But it all comes under the head of the general senselessness of things. So we can go onto more important matters. And what impresses me is the fact that, in my sixty-ninth year, I've been dragged from my bed and taken on a motor ride to the center of Long Island at three

in the morning. I consider that as putting both of you under a serious obligation to me. To stop your nonsense and behave yourselves.

HOPE

After this?

JUDGE STURGIS

Yes, after this! Because you're certainly just as much to blame for this as Stephen is.

HOPE

Really, godfather!

STEPHEN

[*Darkly*]: It's no use, Judge. I admit my position isn't as strong as it might be. And I wouldn't go so far as to say I don't want her back. [*Then, with venomous violence*]: But I'd hate like all hell to take any chances on her coming.

HOPE

You needn't be afraid!

JUDGE STURGIS

Stop it! [*A pause. They eye each other unpleasantly. The* JUDGE *looks from one to the other. Then*]: There's one point I'd like to be satisfied on. [*He glances at the sleeping officer to make sure that he really is sleeping, then*]: I believe I'll ask each of you a question. [*They turn toward him. He holds up his hand sternly.*] I expect honest answers. [*They look*

down.] Stephen, you first. You tell me what it is you remember most happily about your marriage

STEPHEN

In front of Hope?

JUDGE STURGIS

She'll have to answer one just as bad in front of you.

STEPHEN

[*A deep breath, then*]: . . . One Saturday a long time ago. Hope and I were driving out in the country. I got to singing "Down in the Cornfields." Over and over till Hope got to laughing. We both laughed so I had to pull up alongside the road. It's things like that, thousands of things like that, you remember about marriage when it's over. It's fun to be laughed at by the woman you love.

HOPE

[*Moved*]: I remember that Saturday. We were going up in Connecticut somewhere. For our first anniversary.

STEPHEN

I know we were.

JUDGE STURGIS

That's a good answer, Stephen. [*He turns to* HOPE.] Now it's your turn.

HOPE

[*Bracing herself*]: Yes, godfather.

JUDGE STURGIS

Tell me the first thing that pops into your head when I say the word: "Stephen."

HOPE

Not in front of him!

JUDGE STURGIS

Play fair, now!

HOPE

The first thing? [*A deep breath, then*]: The way he always crowded me away from the mirror when we were dressing.

STEPHEN

I hadn't realized that. I'm sorry.

HOPE

I never minded.

JUDGE STURGIS

Two good answers. [*A pause then*]: Roots can grow pretty deep in marriage, can't they?

STEPHEN

It's no use, Judge. Things have gone too far to turn back now.

HOPE

I'm fond of Steve, of course. What you don't realize, though, godfather, is that our marriage had got all stale and meaningless. Like a great weight of deadness that wouldn't come back to life. I simply had

to end it and you can't tell me what else I could have done!

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Very patiently*]: I can tell you to consider the lilies of the field. How they're content to lie quiet all winter long, and don't distrust their periods of quiet. I can tell you what's the most stupendous thing on earth. It's the innocent majesty of the commonplace.

HOPE

[*Rebellious*]: Thanks, I'm not having any! I'd rather have a little fun!

STEPHEN

Fun! Aha!

HOPE

Yes, fun! Aha! Oho!

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Still so very patient as he motions* STEPHEN *to be quiet*]: Isn't it about time you grew up, Hope? After all, your life's about half over.

HOPE

[*Frantic*]: Don't say that!

JUDGE STURGIS

But it is! And you can't go on being the bright child forever.

HOPE

[*Cornered*]: I've got a right to be happy, haven't I?

JUDGE STURGIS

What makes you think so?

HOPE

[*Almost in tears*]: I *have!* Everybody has!

JUDGE STURGIS

I know that's a popular idea. But I see the world full of men who are denied their right to earn a living because they've got passed forty. And I wonder if there can be any such things as rights.

STEPHEN

Judge!

JUDGE STURGIS

I do! And it seems to me that whatever rights may be in this vale of tears are almost certainly the monopoly of children.

HOPE

That isn't fair!

STEPHEN

It *is* fair! It's a damn good point!

JUDGE STURGIS

You can't deny your children have *some* rights?

HOPE

Certainly not!

STEPHEN

I always claim kids have got a right to have both their parents under the same roof.

HOPE

The best psychologists all agree that when couples can't live happily together, the children are better off for a separation!

JUDGE STURGIS

Yours might have a right to ask what right you had to be unhappy.

STEPHEN

That's a damn good point!

HOPE

It's no such thing!

STEPHEN

The hell it isn't! I may be in jail now, but I'm no hophead and I never beat you up!

HOPE

As if a woman could control her happiness!

JUDGE STURGIS

I think most women might easily learn to.

HOPE

How?

JUDGE STURGIS

It strikes me lots of unhappiness doesn't amount to more than just self-pity. Lots of this modern psychology seems to condone self-pity.

STEPHEN

Did you get *that* one?

HOPE

[*Pointing furiously to the police blotter*]: You, with a criminal record in that book! Trying to get me back for the children's sake!

STEPHEN

I never said I wanted you back! I said . . .

HOPE

I don't care what you said! This children argument's old stuff anyway!

JUDGE STURGIS

Do you expect any *new* stuff on marriage?

HOPE

Well, if we don't get some pretty soon!

STEPHEN

The old stuff seems to have *you* stopped!

HOPE

I think the state ought to bring up children! Then we'd never have to be married at all!

STEPHEN

Good God! Socialism!

HOPE

It worked well enough in Sparta!

STEPHEN

Yes, and look at Sparta!

HOPE

All right! Look at it!

STEPHEN

I have! I've been there! It's a dump!

JUDGE STURGIS

Children! [*They are quiet.*] They had no use for the letter I in Sparta. They haven't much use for it in socialism. Much better look into your hearts. No man is any wiser than his heart. I know how little we can be certain of these days. You two can be certain of your youngsters. *I* think you can still be certain of each other.

STEPHEN

[*A pause, then*]: I'd like to think so.

JUDGE STURGIS

Hope won't find the pursuit of happiness much fun. She'll find freedom an awful lot of trouble. She'll be sorry if she doesn't see this through. You know the old saying about marriage, Hope?

HOPE

[*Low*]: Which one?

JUDGE STURGIS

"They will be unhappy and out of that they may make something."

HOPE

[*A long pause, then*]: Do you think we could, Steve?

STEPHEN

If you're not too hard on me.

HOPE

I'll try to be good.

STEPHEN

Hope! [*He takes her in his arms.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

This, children, is the best night's sleep I've ever lost. [THE OFFICER *returns.* HOPE *and* STEPHEN *part, surreptitiously holding hands.*]

THE OFFICER

Sorry I been so long, Judge. But it's all fixed. [*To* THE SLEEPING OFFICER]: Hey, Waldo!

THE SLEEPING OFFICER

Huh?

THE OFFICER

Everything O. K. while I been gone?

THE SLEEPING OFFICER

Huh? [*He continues sleeping.*]

THE OFFICER

He's released on your recognizance. We'll change the charge to reckless driving. There'll be a fine to pay but . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

We're very grateful, officer.

HOPE

You've been a dear!

THE OFFICER

Oh, for Judge Sturgis!

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Shaking hands with him*]: If ever I can do you a good turn!

THE OFFICER

Don't mention it, Judge!

STEPHEN

[*At the same time to* HOPE]: Shall we be on our way?

HOPE

Yes. [*They are moving toward the door.*]

THE OFFICER

Hey! Just a minute! How about the other?

JUDGE STURGIS

[*As Stephen's eyes go wide with horror*]: The other what?

THE OFFICER

The girl he had with him in the wreck.

HOPE

What? ! ! !

THE OFFICER

[*To* STEPHEN *as he crosses to the third door.*] She's still here, you know. Don't go off and leave her on my hands! [*He opens the third door.*] Come on out, lady! Everything's fixed up. You're going home. [*A long pause. Then* PAULINE *enters. She is a personable young woman very well turned out. It is evident that she joins the company very reluctantly. She looks from one to the other and says nothing. They look at her.* JUDGE STURGIS *is profoundly shocked.* HOPE'S *heart seems to stand still.* STEPHEN *is aghast.* THE OFFICER *realizes what he has done.*] Oh, my God!

STEPHEN

[*Turning to* HOPE]: Will you listen to me, Hope? Will you give me a chance to explain?

HOPE

[*Frozen*]: Take me home, please, godfather.

STEPHEN

Till I went to that speakeasy, I never laid eyes on her, Hope!

HOPE

[*Toward the door*]: Please, godfather!

STEPHEN

[*Mortal agony*]: Goddamn it, I'm not a monk! [HOPE *goes out. A futile gesture and* JUDGE STURGIS *follows her.* STEPHEN *stares after them. A motor starts off-stage and fades away.* STEPHEN *turns blindly, walks to the bench beside the door to the cells, sits, doubles up and bursts into sobs.* PAULINE *watches him, takes it all in and turns to the officer.*]

PAULINE

[*Very deliberately*]: You . . . dumb . . . cluck . . . [THE OFFICER *is just starting to explain when the curtain falls.*]

THE SIXTH SCENE

The Private Office of JUDGE STURGIS *downtown in New York. A simple skyscraper room furnished with a desk and two or three leather chairs. A bookcase contains odd legal tomes and some others. The window looks over the harbor and through vistas between neighboring towers. A door gives on outer offices.*

THE JUDGE *sits at his desk holding a typewritten letter in his hand. His eyes follow* STEPHEN *who paces restlessly to and fro.*

STEPHEN

[*Speaking excitedly as the curtain rises*]: I don't *want* to discuss it, Judge. I wrote you that letter so I wouldn't have to. All I ask you to do is take me up and let me go. I'm not going to wait for the partners to ask me to get out. And that's just what'll happen. Because I'm no good any more. I haven't been any good for months. I can't work. I can't . . . [*Very coolly the* JUDGE *tears up the letter.*] *Don't* do that, Judge!

JUDGE STURGIS

We've had you here too long, Stephen, to let you go so easily. [STEPHEN *drops helplessly in a chair. There is a pause, then*]:

STEPHEN

I dunno what to do. Don't think I'm not trying to snap out of it. It's this being married and yet not married. Month after month. I haven't got any life any more. I'm so damn lonely. Seeing the kids, when Hope lets me see 'em . . . Taking 'em to the Zoo and places . . . That only makes it worse. It's all out of joint. Seeing Hope, when I do see her from a distance . . . Thank God that doesn't happen very often. I walk by the place. I walk by. It's hell knowing she's in town and not knowing what she's doing. It's hell not having her to tell her what I'm doing. Nobody gives a damn what I'm doing. I'm so tired. I used to kick when I didn't get my eight hours sleep. Now I go out every night just to get away from my own society and I never get any sleep. It sounds damn silly, doesn't it?

JUDGE STURGIS

No. Not to me. [*A pause. He snaps the switch on his dictaphone and speaks into it.*] Ask Mrs. Ferrier to come in.

STEPHEN

[*Springing to his feet*]: Hope!

JUDGE STURGIS

Sit still. I sent for her when I got your letter. I'm facing the inevitable. This business has to be cleaned up. For your sake. [*Another pause.* STEPHEN *stares terrified at the door. A knock.*] Come in.

[HOPE *enters. She wears the smart, practical costume which is her uniform at Vogue. The tension of her nerves has not lessened. If anything, it has increased. The sight of* STEPHEN *is a shock to her. She controls herself, however, on the threshold, and comes into the room.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

Come in, Hope, and sit down. It was nice of you to get here so quickly.

HOPE

Tell me, please, what you want of me, godfather. This is the day we close the paper at Vogue. I can't give you much time. [*She sits.* STEPHEN *remains standing shakily.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

The Paris fashions have to make way for life sometimes. Stephen and you have got to settle things here this morning. I'm bringing you face to face for Stephen's sake. He isn't the type that can go on at loose ends forever. You've got to let him know just where he stands with you and with the children. And, if you'll forgive me, I'll observe in passing that rude-

ness and cruelty aren't attractive qualities. I haven't heard you speak to him since you came in.

HOPE

[*Hard as nails*]: Good morning, Steve. Have you been in jail lately?

STEPHEN

[*Low*]: Please don't be that way.

HOPE

You want things settled, do you?

STEPHEN

Well, don't you think . . . ?

HOPE

I hadn't thought. I've been so busy finding myself in my new life. I'm quite content to leave things as they are. If a divorce will make you any happier, though, I've no objection.

STEPHEN

I didn't mean anything quite so final. I thought some kind of an understandong or arrangement . . . Just so that I can get a little peace . . .

HOPE

Much better make it final. [*She turns to* JUDGE STURGIS.] You'll represent me, won't you, godfather? Or whatever it is you lawyers do in a divorce court.

STEPHEN

Hope!

HOPE

What?

STEPHEN

You take this pretty calmly.

HOPE

Did you expect me to be terribly upset?

STEPHEN

No. It seems kind of solemn to me, though.

HOPE

I'd be more solemn if I had more time. [*She rises.*] Well, if that's all, godfather. . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Who has been watching her very closely*]: It isn't quite all, Hope.

HOPE

What else?

JUDGE STURGIS

We can save time by reaching an agreement. About grounds and terms and the custody of the children. We have to decide where to get the divorce, too.

HOPE

Where? Right here!

JUDGE STURGIS

There's only one ground in New York.

HOPE

Isn't one enough?

JUDGE STURGIS

The one's adultery.

HOPE

Well, I should think we were pretty well covered on adultery.

STEPHEN

I won't be sued for adultery. I don't think it's any grounds for divorce. Any one can make a little slip and not mean a damn thing by it.

HOPE

Every one doesn't.

STEPHEN

Couldn't you?

HOPE

We won't go into that.

STEPHEN

Well, I refuse to take a tart to a hotel, hire detectives to catch me in bed with her and let the papers make a mess of my good name.

HOPE

Is that what you'd have to do?

JUDGE STURGIS

Yes, Hope, it is.

HOPE

What a filthy law! . . . I'll go to Reno. They have good grounds there. Incompatibility. God knows we're covered thoroughly on that!

STEPHEN

[*Anguish*]: Hope!

HOPE

What?

STEPHEN

Nothing. [*His head falls.*]

HOPE

[*A cold smile*]: About terms. I don't belong to the alimony club. I'm making enough money for myself. I expect Steve to provide for the kids, of course. I guess that's all. Oh! Custody. Well, six months with me and six with him. That's usual, isn't it?

JUDGE STURGIS

Yes. It's usual.

HOPE

Then, if you'll excuse me . . . (*She starts to go.*)

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Who has hardly taken his keen old eyes off her*]: I'm not quite satisfied.

HOPE

What more?

JUDGE STURGIS

Your youngsters will have to divide their loyalties. That can't be helped. Do you feel justified in making them divide their lives and home as well?

STEPHEN

How do you mean, Judge?

HOPE

What would you suggest?

JUDGE STURGIS

That they make their home permanently with one of you and that the other of you plays second fiddle.

STEPHEN

No thanks.

JUDGE STURGIS

Children need peace even more than grown-ups, Stephen.

STEPHEN

But I don't want to play second fiddle, Judge. I love my children and . . .

HOPE

[*Suddenly*]: All right. I'll play second fiddle.

STEPHEN

I can see you!

HOPE

I'll move out of the flat. You can move back. The children can come to me for a week end, now and then. You won't mind if I drop in now and then at supper time.

STEPHEN

[*Flabbergasted*]: Do you propose to leave the kids with me except for a week end now and then?

HOPE

Isn't that fair enough?

STEPHEN

But what in God's name will I do with 'em?

HOPE

That's your problem.

STEPHEN

But men aren't equipped to handle kids! They haven't got the instincts!

HOPE

Women do lots of things men used to do. A few of our old jobs won't hurt men any.

STEPHEN

Any time you put that over on me! You're their mother! I'll do the right thing by 'em as their father. But I can't do what I wasn't meant to do by nature!

HOPE

What's nature got to do with it?

STEPHEN

Plenty! You may change yourself into a man but I'm damned if you change me into a woman!

HOPE

I see! You don't *want* your children!

STEPHEN

Certainly I want 'em, but . . .

HOPE

I make a generous gesture. I offer to withdraw almost entirely. And you . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

Do *you* want the children, Hope? [*A pause.* HOPE *does not answer.*] Do *you* want them, Hope? [*A pause. Hope does not answer.*] Or are you making the most of my suggestion to get rid of them? [*Still* HOPE *does not answer.*] Answer me, Hope.

HOPE

Get rid of them, godfather? What . . . what do you think I am?

JUDGE STURGIS

Does *anything* matter to you but being free?

HOPE

Why . . . [*A pause. Then, with low defiance*]: No. Nothing.

STEPHEN

Good God!

HOPE

[*Fast and low*]: I love my children. I do really. I wanted 'em. I'm glad I had 'em. They filled some kind of a need inside me. For a while I enjoyed taking care of 'em. Now little Steve's seven and Sally's nearly five. They drive me mad!

JUDGE STURGIS

Go on, Hope.

HOPE

They're nice children. If I could see 'em now and then, I'd enjoy 'em. But every day, month in, month out, answering questions. . . .

STEPHEN

This isn't you talking, Hope! This can't be you!

HOPE

It is, though! And plenty of other women with me! Only they haven't got the nerve to say it.

STEPHEN

But it's a general rule that women . . .

HOPE

It's a rule women didn't make and if you don't think it's one hell of a job to be a mother try it yourself and see how you like it. I'm offering you the chance!

JUDGE STURGIS

Ideas! Ideas!

STEPHEN

She's worse than a socialist. She's a Bolshevist!

HOPE

Maybe this is Helena's female ethics coming out. I shouldn't wonder and I don't care if it is! I'll grant you I'm acting like the devil! But I've had my taste of freedom and from now on I'm going to be really free. To go where I please, live how I please, yes, and love whom I pleased! And it's no good holding my duties up to me! I'm interested only in my duty to myself! Call me selfish! Call me an egomaniac! Call me any damn name you can lay your tongues to! You've got to admit I'm being honest with you! [STEPHEN *stares at her in horrified amazement.* JUDGE STURGIS

does not move.] Look at godfather wondering what's come over the world he used to know. It's changed, godfather! Children don't really need parents any more! They bring themselves up! Parents are a hindrance! I *believe* that! Men and women have changed. Marriage has changed. It's bankrupt! Stop staring at me that way!

JUDGE STURGIS

Found yourself, have you, Hope?

HOPE

[*Fortissimo*]: Yes, damn it! And don't you say I haven't!!! [*Pause, then to* STEPHEN]: I'll pull out on the Century Monday. You can move in that night.

JUDGE STURGIS

Wait. [*To* STEPHEN]: Get Emerson. [*As* STEPHEN *turns to the book case*]: I keep him with those old poets on the top shelf.

STEPHEN

[*The book in his hand*]: Emerson.

JUDGE STURGIS

Give it to me. The marker's in the place. [*He takes it.*] I want you both to hear this. It's called "Give All to Love." I'm reading the last stanza of "Give All to Love." [*He reads*]:

"Though thou loved her as thyself,
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dims the day,
Stealing grace from all alive,
Heartily know,
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive."

[*He closes the book.*]

STEPHEN

[*Shaky*]: I'll be all right, Judge.

HOPE

[*Shaky*]: Is that all, godfather?

JUDGE STURGIS

Except to say I'm sorry for you. Because the facts are going to get you in the end.

[*Pause.* HOPE *cannot stop her tears. She tries to speak, but her tears choke her. She goes out quickly. The men look after her. The curtain falls.*]

THE SEVENTH SCENE

The Drawing Room of the Ferrier's flat as in the second scene. Late afternoon. A few days after the previous scene.

ADA *is carrying a suitcase and a hat box down the stairs. The telephone is ringing.* HELENA *goes to answer. The doorbell rings.*

HELENA

Answer the door, will you, Ada? I've got this. [ADA *deposits her load and goes into the entry.* HELENA *speaks into the telephone.*] Yes? . . . Well, hold on just a minute. . . . [*She calls.*] Ada? [ADA *returns from the entry carrying a large box of flowers.*]

ADA

What does a lady do with flowers in a Pullman?

HELENA

She usually ends by throwing 'em out the window. The taxi's here. Is the trunk ready?

ADA

[*As she deposits the flowers on a chair*]: I was just closing it when the doctor came.

HELENA

Well, go ahead and close it. [*Into the telephone*]: You can send up for the trunk now.

ADA

Oh, do you think we'd better, Mrs. Grey?

HELENA

She can't be much longer. The Lake Shore leaves at . . . [HOPE *enters. She wears hat and coat and her spirits are very low.*]

HOPE

Here I am now. Don't forget the hot water bag, Ada. It's cold in Reno.

ADA

[*On her way upstairs*]: Don't mention the place to one of my religion! [*She disappears above.* HOPE *is shedding hat and coat listlessly.*]

HELENA

Now, Hope, you haven't any time to . . .

HOPE

I've lost my job.

HELENA

You haven't!

HOPE

Practically. They kept me waiting all the afternoon. That's why I had to miss the Century. I wanted a leave of absence. Oh, they were very nice about it. [*She sits wearily.*] But they say the work's got to be done while I'm away and . . .

HELENA

There are other jobs.

HOPE

I know. But I thought I was doing so well there. I thought they liked me. They do. But they don't care whether I come back or not. Whatever made me say I'd go to Reno? [*She closes her eyes in despair.*]

HELENA

It never rains but it pours.

HOPE

What else?

HELENA

There seems to be something the matter with the children. [HOPE *sits up.*] I don't think it's anything. The doctor's up there now.

HOPE

The doctor! [*She is on her feet and running up the stairs.*]

HELENA

Nurse sent for him. Children always get sick when their mothers go away. It's an unwritten law of childhood. [*The doorbell and the telephone both ring.* HOPE *goes out above.*] There's the porter for the trunk. I'll just . . . [*Over her shoulder at the telephone as she goes into the entry.*] Good heavens! [*Then she is heard in the entry.*] Stephen!

STEPHEN

[*In the entry*]: Hullo, Helena! You here! Bring everything right in. [HE *enters carrying an overwhelming load of bags and parcels. The porter who follows him in is even more heavily laden with a suitcase, a valise, several loose books and a golf bag.* HELENA *brings up the rear.* STEPHEN *is addressing the porter.*] Put the suitcase down anywhere. I suppose you know you're dropping all those books. Here, give me the golf sticks! Careful with that little one, it's full of Scotch! I've got a new bootlegger, Helena. He studies law at night.

HELENA

[*At the same time*]: We weren't expecting you so soon. [*Into the telephone*]: I know it is. Tell him to wait and send up that porter! [*Doorbell.*] Never mind! Here he is! [*She rings off and goes into the entry.*]

STEPHEN

[*While the Porter sets things in order*]: I'm damn glad to get home. I see she's put my picture machine away. She might have put that back before she left.

[HELENA *returns followed by a 2nd Porter.*]

HELENA

[*To the 2nd Porter*]: The maid will show you. [*She calls.*] Here's the porter, Ada! [*The 2nd Porter goes up the stair.*]

STEPHEN

Don't have me on your mind, Helena.

HELENA

I haven't got you on my mind.

STEPHEN

We're going to make out all right, the kids and I are! Now that things are settled, I'm going to get a little peace. That's what I need.

[*A third Porter enters carrying* STEPHEN'S *trunk.*]

HELENA

Stephen, I tried to reach you this afternoon to tell you that . . .

3RD PORTER

Where do you want this trunk, sir?

STEPHEN

If you'll just carry it upstairs.

1st Porter

Up *those* stairs?

Stephen

It came down those stairs.

1st Porter

We got a union rule about the weight uh trunks we gotta carry upstairs.

Stephen

But you same fellows. . . .

3rd Porter

[*At the same time*]: Will you cut out chewing the rag?

1st Porter

I'm chewing the rag in your interest, brother.

Helena

Well, take it off him in his interest.

Stephen

Here! Let me lend a hand!

1st Porter

I'll do it, sir.

Stephen

You keep on talking!

1st Porter

[*Preventing* Stephen *from helping with the trunk*]: No, Mr. Ferrier, please let me, sir. I was only calling your attention to our union rule about the weight uh trunks. . . .

Stephen

I know that but in the meanwhile . . .

3rd Porter

There she goes! [*The trunk crashes to the floor.* Helena *screams.* Ada *appears above.*]

Stephen

Christ!

Ada

Oh, it's you, Mr. Ferrier!

Helena

Stephen, are you hurt?

Stephen

Not much. [*Then, to both porters who are bent over, listening*]: What are you doing? Listening for the echo?

3rd Porter

[*To the 1st Porter*]: I thought I heard the sound of falling plaster.

1st Porter

[*To the 3rd Porter*]: These here cooperatives ain't built to be treated rough.

3rd Porter

Come on, quick, Bill, before the superintendent gets here. [*The trunk is picked up by both porters.*]

1st Porter

Got your end?

3rd Porter

Yeah. Let's go.

Ada

[*She has come half-way down*]: Mind the bannister!

1st Porter

It can't be done! [Stephen *has been trying heroically not to sneeze. Now the sneeze comes in spite of everything. Each of the porters misses a step and both* Ada *and* Helena *gasp.*]

Helena

Stephen, what *are* you doing?

Stephen

Sneezing. [*Sneeze.*] Can't help it. [*Sneeze.*] Got a cold. [*Sneeze.*] Always do catch cold . . . [*Sneeze.*] when I've been under a strain. [*Sneeze.*]

3rd Porter

All right, Bill?

1st Porter

Now I know what it was, I am. [*They resume their ascent.*]

HELENA

You, too!

STEPHEN

Ada!

ADA

[*Backing up the stair in front of the porters*]: Yes, sir?

STEPHEN

Get me some lemon juice.

ADA

Yes, sir, as soon as I . . . [*The 2nd Porter, carrying* HOPE'S *trunk, appears at the top of the stair.*]

2ND PORTER

Gangway!

ADA

[*To the 2nd Porter*]: Stop! Stop!

STEPHEN

What's *that?*

HELENA

That's Hope's trunk.

STEPHEN

Didn't Hope take the Century?

HELENA

She's taking the Lake Shore.

1ST PORTER

What do you think you're doing?

2ND PORTER

I'm coming down.

ADA

You can't come down!

STEPHEN

Why wasn't I told?

HELENA

I phoned your office.

STEPHEN

I was too sick to go downtown today. I shouldn't have gone out at all.

2ND PORTER

Who says I can't?

1ST PORTER

Can't you see you can't?

3RD PORTER

We're coming up!

ADA

Don't drop it on me!

3RD PORTER

[*At the same time*]: If you don't want to get killed, sweetheart!

1ST PORTER

Back up!

2ND PORTER

I can't back up!

3RD PORTER

Can you back down, Bill?

HELENA

[*At the same time*]: Well, you're here now. It doesn't matter.

STEPHEN

Yes, it does matter! I wouldn't have come! I don't want to see Hope!

2ND PORTER

Look out!

3RD PORTER

Is she slipping?

2ND PORTER

She's slipped!

ADA

Mind the lamp!

STEPHEN

Christ!

HELENA

[*Scream*]: Ah!

[*All at the same time.*]

[*The lower trunk and the 1st Porter have both slipped and the lamp has gone over.* STEPHEN *dives to the rescue.* HOPE *appears above. The telephone rings.*]

3RD PORTER

Are you hurt bad, Bill?

1ST PORTER

I knew it couldn't be done!

2ND PORTER

Gangway! [*He starts down regardless.*]

ADA

Mind that table! Mind the wall!

[*At the same time.*]

HOPE

What *is* going on here? [STEPHEN *looks up at her and watches her darkly through the following.*]

HELENA

It's Stephen's trunk coming in and yours going out. [*Then into the telephone*]: Well, tell it to keep on waiting.

2ND PORTER

Didn't I say I had the right of way? [*Descending*]: All you guys need is a bit uh muscle and a little skill. [HOPE *starts down.*]

HOPE

For Heaven's sake!

HELENA

Never mind that! Never mind anything. [*Urging the 2nd porter toward the door*]: Just get it down and put it on the taxi. [*She follows him into entry.*] And tell the driver. . . .

ADA

[*Straightening up*]: The lovely lamp!

HOPE

It doesn't matter! Nothing matters!

3RD PORTER

How about this trunk of yours, sir?

[Stephen *is still staring darkly at* Hope. Helena *returns from the entry.*]

1st Porter

Shan't we carry it up now, sir?

Helena

If you can be quiet about it. [*To* Ada]: You go along and show them where. [*The trunk is carried up during the ensuing.*]

Hope

Dear God! [*She sits tragically.*]

Stephen

Why haven't you gone? I had my mind all made up that you'd be gone! Can't I count on you for anything?

Hope

They've got whooping cough.

Helena

They haven't!

Stephen

Who's got whooping cough?

Hope

Who do you suppose?

STEPHEN

The children? Not the children! [*Off stage and upstairs a child whoops stupendously.*] Is that . . . is that one of the children?

HOPE

It sounds like a sea lion but I think it's Sally. [STEPHEN *starts up the stair.*] Don't go up. The doctor's still swabbing.

STEPHEN

But there might be something I could do! [*Pronounced "bite be subthig."*]

HOPE

What have *you* got?

STEPHEN

A cold in my head.

HOPE

Dear God!

STEPHEN

I always catch cold when I'm under a strain!

HOPE

[*To* HELENA]: How much time have I got?

HELENA

Not any too much.

HOPE

I've already missed one train. It won't kill me to miss another.

STEPHEN

[*Striding as far from her as possible*]: If I'd known you hadn't gone. . . .

HOPE

Oh, stop complaining! What difference does it make?

STEPHEN

It makes all the difference! I want a little peace! My mind was all made up that you'd taken the Century and . . . .

HOPE

I tell you the children have got whooping cough!

STEPHEN

Is that my fault?

HOPE

How can I leave 'em now?

STEPHEN

I thought you didn't want 'em?

HOPE

Stop bringing things up! [*A pause. Suddenly she stands.*] No! I've got my ticket. I've got *my* mind made up. I don't care what the children have, I'm going!

STEPHEN

Like hell you are! You can't go off and leave me with my hands full of whooping cough!

HOPE

I've got to go!

STEPHEN

I won't stand for it!

HOPE

I thought you wanted the children!

STEPHEN

Now with whooping cough! I won't . . . I . . . [*Sneeze.*]

HOPE

Dear God!

STEPHEN

Where . . . [*Sneeze.*] Where's my lemon juice?

HELENA

I'll get it.

HOPE

Damn his lemon juice!

HELENA

Hope!

HOPE

I mean it! Aren't things dreary enough without him catching cold and screaming for lemon juice?

STEPHEN

I didn't scream! And you know I always catch cold when I'm under a strain.

HELENA

All men do.

STEPHEN

Each time she had a baby I caught the grippe!

HOPE

Don't I remember!

STEPHEN

Don't say that, Hope! I've suffered enough! I've . . .

RUSH

[*In the entry*]: Hello! Is anybody home?

STEPHEN

Bigelow! [RUSH *enters carrying a large box of flowers.*]

RUSH

The door's wide open. I was afraid I was going to be late. How are the . . . [*His voice dies as he sees* STEPHEN. *He puts his flowers down on a chair and prepares himself to meet* STEPHEN's *menacing advance.*]

HELENA

Now, Stephen, please . . .

STEPHEN

What are you doing here?

HOPE

[*Weary unto death*]: Oh, Steve!

STEPHEN

Are you planning to marry my wife?

RUSH

Not if I can avoid it gracefully.

STEPHEN

Then let me tell you you're not welcome here. [*Pronounced "Welcub."*]

RUSH

I'm more welcome than you are! [*Pronounced "I'b bore welcub thad."*]

STEPHEN

Stop imitating me! ["*Ibitating.*"]

HELENA

No man can look heroic with a cold, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Who wants to look heroic! I don't need to look heroic to fix him! I . . . [*Sneeze.*]

HOPE

Sneeze in his face and give him a cold, too. [*Door-bell.* ADA *and the two porters are just coming down. She hurries past them to answer. They follow her into entry.*]

STEPHEN

It doesn't matter. [*Sneeze.*] Nothing matters. [*Sneeze.*] If he doesn't get out, though . . . [*Sneeze.*]

HELENA

You'll get consumption!

RUSH

I always liked you, Steve.

STEPHEN

Don't say that! Don't say that! [*Sneeze.*]

HOPE

[*Wildly*]: Oh, God, does *everything* have to turn ridiculous? [*She goes off into an attack of helpless giggles.*]

[JUDGE STURGIS *enters.* ADA *crosses and goes out.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

What's this, Hope? You still here?

STEPHEN

The kids have got whooping cough! I've got a cold! Hope's got a laughing jag! [*He struggles to suppress another sneeze.*]

HOPE

[*Going to* JUDGE STURGIS]: Would you mind taking me in your arms, please, godfather?

JUDGE STURGIS

[*His arms around her*]: My dear Hope! My dear child! [*She buries her giggles against his chest. The telephone is ringing again and* ADA *has entered with* STEPHEN'S *lemon juice.*]

ADA

[*To* STEPHEN]: Here you are, Mr. Ferrier.

STEPHEN

What is it?

ADA

Your lemon juice.

STEPHEN

Oh, thank you, Ada. [*He takes it. She goes.*]

HELENA

[*Speaking through, into the telephone*]: What is it this time? Well, keep it waiting!

RUSH

Keep what waiting?

HOPE

My taxi! The Lake Shore Limited! All my plans! All my future! All my dreams! And all Steve's chances for a little peace! [*Again she doubles up.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

All waiting?

HOPE

All waiting for Dr. Wohlheim. . .

HELENA

To come down and deliver himself . . .

RUSH

On the whooping cough?

STEPHEN

[*Emerging from his lemon juice with a terrific bellow*]: Dr. Wohlheim!

HOPE

Come down, Dr. Wohlheim!

HELENA

[*Infected*]: Come down and put us out of misery!

RUSH

[*Quite mad*]: Altogether, now! We want Wohlheim!

JUDGE STURGIS

Children!

HOPE
HELENA
STEPHEN
RUSH

[*All fortissimo over* JUDGE STURGIS]: We want Wohlheim! We want Wohlheim! We want . . .

[DR. WOHLHEIM *appears above. He is stout, elderly, German and angry. He wears his grave clothes and his brow is crowned with that type of reflector used by doctors for looking into throats and noses.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*Heavy German accent*]: Quiet, *if* you please!

[*Both children whoop off-stage in close harmony.*]

HOPE

We can't help it, Doctor! We're going mad!

RUSH

[*Jumping up and down like a Hogarthian lunatic*]: We're on our way to Bloomingdale, to Bloomingdale, to . . .

HOPE
RUSH

[*In unison*]: Bloomingdale! We're on our way to Bloomingdale! To Bloomingdale in the morning!

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*Coming down*]: Quiet!

HELENA

It's true, Doctor, they *are* mad! They've talked about the same thing for months and months and they've gone raving lunatics!

[STEPHEN *delivers himself of stupendous sneeze.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

What's the matter with *you?*

STEPHEN

I always catch cold when I'm under a strain.

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*He goes to* STEPHEN.] What makes you think you haven't got whooping cough? Say: "Ah!"

STEPHEN

Ah.

DR. WOHLHEIM

Bend back your head! [STEPHEN *obeys. The others stand breathless while* DR. WOHLHEIM *produces his nostril distending instrument from his pocket and looks up Stephen's nose.*] So. [*He releases Stephen and turns to the company.*] Put him in a warm place and keep him there. [STEPHEN *subsides.*] Now, why were you calling me?

HOPE

I'm sorry, Doctor, but you see, my train . . .

STEPHEN

[*At the same time*]: She thinks she's going off and leave me with . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

She's going to Reno, Doctor. To divorce her husband.

DR. WOHLHEIM

Oho!

HOPE

And once a woman makes up her mind to such a step . . .

HELENA

Only the very gravest reason could . . .

RUSH

Yes. [*Pause, then*]:

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*To* HOPE]: Why are you divorcing him?

HOPE

[*Frantic*]: No! No! We're not going over it again!

STEPHEN

We certainly are not!

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*To* STEPHEN]: Why are you letting her divorce you?

STEPHEN

What can *I* do about it?

DR. WOHLHEIM

Spank her!

STEPHEN

Hah!

HOPE

Doctor!

JUDGE STURGIS

Well!

RUSH

Papa's knee!

DR. WOHLHEIM

Order, please! [*Silence.*] I alone, in this room, am qualified to hold an opinion on this question.

STEPHEN

You!

DR. WOHLHEIM

I. As a child specialist. You have fine children. You can afford to have more fine children. Fine children are the future of the race. If you don't have them, raise them and give them to the world, you forfeit your only excuse for existing. Your sole importance is that you are good breeders.

HOPE

I deny it!

DR. WOHLHEIM

What other contribution can you make? Have you genius? Have you talent, even?

HOPE

I don't say we have, but surely . . .

DR. WOHLHEIM

Ah! You see?

HOPE

No, I do not see!

DR. WOHLHEIM

But, my dear lady, the biological function of man is to impregnate woman and the function of woman it to do the rest. And if a man and woman have the intelligence and character to make good parents . . .

HOPE

I'm not interested in biology.

DR. WOHLHEIM

Biology is interested in you.

STEPHEN

That ought to make you pretty happy. [*To* DR. WOHLHEIM]: I've heard some hot arguments since this business started, but you beat all.

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*To* STEPHEN]: If you had courage, conscience or conviction, you would put your foot down on this woman's nonsense, carry her up those stairs this minute and impregnate her again!

STEPHEN

Will you please be more delicate in your . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Horrified*]: Hold on, now, Doctor!

RUSH

Good Lord!

HELENA

The man's a savage!

HOPE

I'm getting out of here! [*She makes for her bags.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

I don't believe that, Mrs. Ferrier.

HOPE

Don't you? Well watch me. [*She begins putting on her hat.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

You cannot possibly want to leave this house.

HOPE

Can't I? Why not?

DR. WOHLHEIM

You have two sick children.

HOPE

They're not so sick that . . .

DR. WOHLHEIM

If they weren't sick at all they'd still be your children.

HOPE

[*Furiously*]: I may as well tell you I'm giving up my children! That is their father and I . . .

DR. WOHLHEIM

No, Mrs. Ferrier . . .

HOPE

Oh, yes, I am!

DR. WOHLHEIM

Poor half women do such things. Not real women.

HOPE

[*Violent, now*]: I'm done with being a wife and mother! I've made up my mind to that!

DR. WOHLHEIM

Your mind, perhaps, but not your physiology!

JUDGE STURGIS

Good! That's good!

STEPHEN

[*At the same time, completely bewildered*]: Say, what *is* this?

HOPE

[*At the same time*]: My what! I don't know what you mean!

DR. WOHLHEIM

Oh, yes you do! I'm saying nothing you haven't said over and over to yourself!

HOPE

How dare you talk to me this way?

DR. WOHLHEIM

How dare *you* set yourself against your instinct of a thousand centuries? How dare you lower yourself beneath the savages and beasts? How dare you deny your mother function?

HOPE

I'm going! You let me go! You . . .

DR. WOHLHEIM

Stand where you are! . . . So! . . . Your little ideas may run away to Reno . . . But your deep female soul will hold you with your young.

HOPE

I *want* to leave my children! I've *got* to leave 'em!

DR. WOHLHEIM

You can't leave them! Try to walk through that door! Go on! Try!

[HOPE *wavers, then sits as suddenly as though the wind had been knocked out of her.*]

HOPE

[*Almost voiceless*]: I might have known I couldn't! [JUDGE STURGIS *and* HELENA *start toward her.*]

HELENA

Are you all right?

JUDGE STURGIS

[*At the same time*]: Hope, dear . . .

DR. WOHLHEIM

[*Holding up his hand to stop them*]: Shhh! Here are mysterious forces working that are so old we have forgotten even their mystery. [*He turns away from* HOPE *and goes past the others who stand watching him fascinated. He goes up the stair and out of sight, muttering*]: Let the childless and the poor divorce! Let the parents of sickly children divorce! But let no man put the breeders of the healthy young asunder! Let no man do that! Let no man . . .

HOPE

[*When he is gone*]: Doctor! . . . [*She sways in her chair.* JUDGE STURGIS *catches her.*] No. Let him go. He's a fiend from hell.

JUDGE STURGIS

A fiend who knows old secrets, Hope.

HELENA

I can *feel* the primaeval ooze around my feet!

HOPE

I'm tired. Leave me alone, please. Go away and leave me alone. All of you. [*Her head falls.* JUDGE STURGIS *looks to* HELENA *who nods.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

Dear Hope! [*To* HELENA]: We'll slip away.

HELENA

Quietly. [*She turns to* STEPHEN *who is standing in open-mouthed bewilderment.*] Come along with us, Stephen. Go back to your club for a few days.

JUDGE STURGIS

Give her time to find herself really. [STEPHEN *takes up the telephone.*]

HELENA

Good boy, Stephen!

STEPHEN

[*Into the telephone as* HELENA *goes to* HOPE *and* JUDGE STURGIS *takes* RUSH *toward the entry*]: This is Mr. Ferrier. Send those porters back for my trunk will you?

HELENA

[*Bending over* HOPE]: All right, now, Hope darling?

STEPHEN

[*Into the telephone*]: What's that? [*To* HELENA]: Hope's taxi's still waiting.

HELENA

You take it. [*Back over* HOPE]: Hope . . .

STEPHEN

[*Into the telephone*]: Hold it. You can put my trunk on it. [*He hangs up, lost in resentful thought.*]

HELENA

I'll come by in the morning. I'll be at home tonight if you want me. Stephen's going back to his club. You'd better go to bed. [HOPE *sits motionless without answering.*] Ready, Stephen? [*He does not answer. She is alarmed at the set look on his face.*] Stephen . . . [STEPHEN *shakes his head.*] For heaven's sake!

JUDGE STURGIS

[*Coming down to* STEPHEN]: Take our word for this! Who knows but she may . . .

STEPHEN

No. It's no use. I had my mind all set for her to go. I've got to have a little peace. There's no reason why husbands should bear all the brunt. I've suffered enough. I won't go back to that damn club. I've been having too much trouble with my laundry.

HELENA

Don't be absurd!

STEPHEN

I'm not being absurd!

HELENA

But your laundry doesn't matter now!

STEPHEN

A man's laundry always matters! I've lost half the collars to my shirts! My golf stockings go out golf stockings and come back mittens! (*Pronounced "Bitnds."*)

RUSH

Come back what?

STEPHEN

Mittens!

RUSH

What? ! ! !

STEPHEN

Mittens! M-I-T-T-E-N-S ! ! ! [*Doorbell.*]

HOPE

[*Lifting her head in despair*]: Please!

HELENA

It's Stephen! He hasn't any sense of . . .

STEPHEN

Careful, Helena! Careful what you say! [ADA *enters and crosses to the entry.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

Come along, Stephen!

STEPHEN

I will not come along! And I won't let any woman say I haven't got a sense of humor!

HELENA

Who said that?

STEPHEN

You were just going to! [*The First and Third Porters enter and go upstairs unobserved.* ADA *follows.*]

HELENA

Stop him, somebody!

HOPE

[*Rising desperately*]: Oh, men and women! Men and women!

STEPHEN

This is my home! A man's home is his castle!

JUDGE STURGIS

Don't ruin things now!

HOPE

Men and women!

HELENA

Haven't you any tact?

STEPHEN

No sense of humor and no tact! What else?

RUSH

Keep your shirt on, Steve!

[*2nd porter enters carrying Hope's trunk and proceeds, unobserved, to carry it up the stairs, his eye cocked on the conflict below.*]

STEPHEN

I've got my shirt on!

HELENA

But you can't stay here! I won't let you stay here!

STEPHEN

Let's see you get me out! She said she was going . . .

HOPE

[*Ad lib.*]: Men and women! Men and women!

JUDGE STURGIS

But she can't leave the children!

STEPHEN

They're my children!

[*The 1st and 3rd porters start down with Stephen's trunk. Like the 2nd, who is still going up, they immediately become engrossed in the conflict below.*]

JUDGE STURGIS

We know that!

HELENA

You don't understand!

HOPE

[*Ad lib. at the same time*]: Oh, men and women!

STEPHEN

Well, I won't stand for it! I've suffered enough!

JUDGE STURGIS

Stephen, nobody wants to deprive you of . . .

STEPHEN

This is my flat! I pay the rent!

RUSH

For Pete's sake, Steve!

STEPHEN

She said she was going! I want peace! I've got a right . . .

JUDGE STURGIS

Good Lord! Rights again!

HOPE

[*Ad lib. throughout*]: Oh, men and women! Men and women!

STEPHEN

Stop saying that!!!!

JUDGE STURGIS

Children! Children!

3rd Porter

Hey!

2nd Porter

Look out! ! ! ! [*But it is too late. They have collided and both trunks and both porters crash down the stairs together.*]

Stephen

Christ!

Judge Sturgis

What!

Helena

[*Scream*]: Ah!

Rush

Where did they come from?

Ada

[*Above*]: Mother of God, they're killed!

Both Porters

[*Groans and outcries*]: Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! [Hope *notices nothing, but continues to stride up and down, saying over and over to herself, now aloud, now soft: "Men and women! Men and women!"*]

Helena

Will you stop playing with those silly trunks!

1st Porter

[*Above*]: Lady, be fair!

JUDGE STURGIS

Are you hurt?

2ND PORTER

Certainly we're hurt!

1ST PORTER

They ain't hurt. They're nervous!

3RD PORTER

Get off me, will you?

HELENA

It's a miracle they're not killed!

2ND PORTER

My back! My back!

[DR. WOHLHEIM *appears above.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

Gott in Himmel, wass machen die denn da unten?

2ND PORTER

Where was you going?

3RD PORTER

Why couldn't you wait?

2ND PORTER

Why didn't you look?

1ST PORTER

Watching the scrap, huh!

JUDGE STURGIS

Give 'em a drink.

HELENA

Where's the liquor?

RUSH

Steve, got your keys?

1ST PORTER

[*Pointing down to the luggage he brought in with him*]: There's plenty in that bag. [RUSH *dives for it.*]

HELENA

I'll get some glasses.

3RD PORTER

Never mind glasses, lady.

[RUSH *gets the bottle out and the 2nd Porter and 3rd Porter go as far with it as the action allows.*]

STEPHEN

Oh, my God, what a day!

HOPE

Men and women! Men and . . .

STEPHEN

You go to Reno! Go on! Go to Reno!

HOPE

Oh, men and women!

STEPHEN

Will you stop saying that?

HOPE

Men and . . .

STEPHEN

If you don't stop, I'll stop you! [*Pointing up to* DR. WOHLHEIM.] I'll do what he said! I'll spank you! [*This threat is fortissimo.*]

JUDGE STURGIS
Children!

HELENA
Stephen!

RUSH
Steve!

HOPE

Men and . . . What? [*She holds up her hands for silence.*]

STEPHEN

You heard me.

HOPE

[*Dead voice*]: Did you say . . . spank me?

STEPHEN

[*Pause, then*]: Yes.

HOPE

[*Pause, then*]: Oh! [*This is a faint exclamation of confirmation. Without seeming to know what she is doing, she slaps his face with all her might.*]

DR. WOHLHEIM

Ach!

RUSH

Wonk!

1ST PORTER

To your corners!

HELENA

Hope! What are you doing?

ADA

Mrs. Ferrier! [STEPHEN *holds up his hand for silence. He gets it.*]

STEPHEN

[*Eye to eye with* HOPE]: All right. . . . Now! [*A left hook emerges from his side and catches her on the side of the jaw. She goes down without a sound.*]

HELENA

[*Scream*]: Ah!

JUDGE STURGIS

Stephen!

RUSH

Steve!

ADA

[*Scream*]: Ah!

DR. WOHLHEIM

Also! [*He starts down*—HELENA *bends over Hope's prostrate form.* STEPHEN *stands aghast at what he has done. The others look on.*]

1ST PORTER

[*Still above*]: Served her Goddamn right! Count her out, Bill!

3RD PORTER

[*Stepping forward in the most professional manner*]: One . . . Two . . . Three . . . Four . . . Five . . . Six . . . Seven . . .

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE EIGHTH SCENE

The drawing room of an apartment on the West Side in New York. Just that and very little more, the little more consisting of a good many photographs of men and as many modernistic dolls as there are places to put them. Door gives on the corridor and bedroom. It is four o'clock in the afternoon after the preceding scene.

STEPHEN *is pacing feverishly to and fro. Two private detectives sit watching him with considerable curiosity. Though he makes no sound, it can be seen that he is talking to himself. The* DETECTIVES *exchange a glance, now and then, of silent comment. When this has gone on long enough, there is the sound of a latch key in the corridor door.* STEPHEN *leaps to open and discloses* PAULINE, *the tenant of the apartment, her latch key in her hand.*

STEPHEN

Polly!

PAULINE

Steve!

STEPHEN

At last!

PAULINE

I'm sorry I'm late. [*She enters. He closes the door.*]

STEPHEN

It's all right. Your maid let us in.

POLLY

Us? [*The* DETECTIVES *rise.*]

STEPHEN

Yes. These are two friends of mine. [*To the* DETECTIVES]: What did you say your names were?

1ST DETECTIVE

We didn't say.

2ND DETECTIVE

You never asked us.

STEPHEN

I'm asking you now.

1ST DETECTIVE

I'm Joe. He's Ralph.

STEPHEN

Thank you. [*To* PAULINE]: My friends, Joe and Ralph. [*To the* DETECTIVES]: This is the lady in the case.

BOTH DETECTIVES

Pleased to meet you.

STEPHEN

Now, I'll kiss her. [*He does.*] Did you see that?

BOTH DETECTIVES

Yes.

STEPHEN

That wasn't enough?

BOTH DETECTIVES

No.

STEPHEN

I knew it wouldn't be.

PAULINE

Do you mind telling me what you're up to?

STEPHEN

I've got to tell you. I've just been practising telling you. Walking up and down and up and down and practising to myself. I . . . [*To the* DETECTIVES]: You'd better wait downstairs, boys. And then come up and break in on us. The way you said.

PAULINE

Did you say "break in," Steve?

STEPHEN

Yes, I did, Polly. I can explain. [*To the* DETECTIVES]: Just go along, boys.

1st Detective

How soon shall we break in?

Stephen

Use your own judgment. Smoke cigarettes. Take a walk. Then. . . . [*He has got them to the door.*] If you get bored, the Natural History Museum's just up the street. [*He gets them out and turns back to* Pauline.] Will you be my co-respondent?

Pauline

Have you gone crazy?

Stephen

That's just what I've done. I went crazy yesterday afternoon about this time and socked my wife. With my clenched fist I socked her. On the jaw. [*He drops into a chair clutching his head.*] Oh, God!

Pauline

That wasn't nice of you and I expect it made her pretty mad.

Stephen

I dunno what it made her. I stayed just long enough to make sure I hadn't killed her. Then I ran out of the house. The next thing I knew I was standing in front of the Ansonia.

Pauline

What did you do there? Go in or take the subway?

STEPHEN

I walked the streets. I went to a hotel. To get some sleep. I couldn't sleep. Presently it was morning. I got up. And sent out for a shirt.

PAULINE

What did you want a shirt for?

STEPHEN

I hadn't any clothes.

PAULINE

Don't tell me you did all this naked!

STEPHEN

I had only the clothes I had on, I mean. I needed a clean shirt. I had the barber come up to shave me. I wanted him to cut my throat. I wanted him to cut off my left hand. I hit her with a left. Like this. [*He illustrates.*] Oh, God!

PAULINE

He didn't cut your throat.

STEPHEN

I didn't ask him. I could see by looking at him it wasn't any use. I thought of you instead. So I went ahead and hired those detectives.

PAULINE

What detectives?

STEPHEN

Joe and Ralph.

PAULINE

I never knew detectives looked like that!

STEPHEN

Detectives vary. I brought 'em along so they'd be handy to come in and catch us.

PAULINE

What do they catch us at?

STEPHEN

Well, the usual thing. I know it's sordid. But you don't mind doing a favor for a friend?

PAULINE

And you in this condition? I'd sooner take a chance on a gorilla!

STEPHEN

Don't turn me down! I'm giving up everything I prize on earth! I'm giving up my children! The court'll give 'em to her! She won't even have to let me see 'em! My children'll grow up and they won't know me!

PAULINE

All because you socked her!

STEPHEN

I knocked her out! There she lay unconscious on the floor! My wife!

PAULINE

What a break for her!

STEPHEN

Polly!

PAULINE

Well, is there anything she can't take you for after that?

STEPHEN

There's nothing she's not entitled to after that! [*A new thought strikes him.*] I had a cold last night! I haven't had a trace of cold all day!

PAULINE

Well, you took quite a bit of exercise.

STEPHEN

Is that what cured me? I feel as though I'd changed. As though I weren't Steve Ferrier any more, but some horrible, sadistic brute!

PAULINE

Your wife's a fool if she lets you go. I think it would be lovely to be your wife!

STEPHEN

You don't know! You don't know!

PAULINE

And I'm not likely to find out.

STEPHEN

You will be my co-respondent, won't you? I've got to have one! I've got to take my medicine if it's the last thing I do on earth! It will be, too! I'll change my name and go to the Middle West! Don't turn me down! I'll buy you anything you want at Cartier's! I'll set you up! I'll look after you all your life!

PAULINE

In the Middle West?

STEPHEN

Don't kid me!!!

PAULINE

Take a drink and pull yourself together. [*She goes to fetch one.*]

STEPHEN

I couldn't.

PAULINE

I could. [*She returns with a bottle of brandy and two glasses which she places on whatever piece of furniture comes handy.*] With this problem on my hands, I need one. [*She serves herself.*]

STEPHEN

It isn't such a problem. We don't have to give more than an impression.

PAULINE

A good many husbands have wept on my shoulder, Steve. You're the only real married man I've ever known.

STEPHEN

I won't be that much longer.

PAULINE

You'll never be anything else, so why don't you stay married and save yourself all that wear and tear?

STEPHEN

Do you think I could ever look my wife in the face again?

PAULINE

Her face is probably all right by now.

STEPHEN

I didn't mean that!

PAULINE

Neither did I. I meant, what's the good of you getting divorced? You'll only marry again.

STEPHEN

If God Almighty walked into this room and said to me: "Steve Ferrier, I've got the very girl for your second wife!" I'd say "Pooh!" to him. Just like that! "Pooh! Pooh!"

PAULINE

I wish *I* knew what to say to *you!* I'd like to meet your wife. I'd like to give her a piece of my mind. [*The telephone rings.*] Cheest! The cops!

STEPHEN

We haven't even started co-responding!

PAULINE

We're not going to start!

STEPHEN

Polly, I'm desperate! ! ! !

PAULINE

Are you? [*She is at a loss. The telephone rings again.*] I got to tell 'em something! We can't have 'em crash the door and just find us singing "Eli Eli." [*She answers the telephone.*] Hello! [*Pause.*] Who wants to know? [*Pause.*] Who? [*Pause.*] Who? [*Pause.*] Well, send her up! [*She rings off frozen.*]

STEPHEN

Send who up?

PAULINE

Guess.

STEPHEN

We don't want any women up here!

PAULINE

I want *her!*

STEPHEN

[*Pause, then*]: It's not . . . It's not Hope! . . . It's not my wife!

PAULINE

Pour yourself a drink, Steve! You're going to need one now.

STEPHEN

Now, listen, Polly!

PAULINE

I'm doing this!

STEPHEN

I won't have it!

PAULINE

Try and stop me!

STEPHEN

You're kidding, aren't you?

PAULINE

She won't think so!

STEPHEN

But she can't have come here! How would she know! What would she come here for?

PAULINE

She'll find that out when she gets here!

STEPHEN

By God, you *are* serious! I'll put a stop to this. I'll . . . [*He grabs for the telephone.*]

PAULINE

No, you don't!

STEPHEN

[*Struggling with her*]: Look out, now, Polly! You'll get hurt! [*A knock at the door.*]

PAULINE

Too late! [*They stand quite still. Then* PAULINE, *with deadly swiftness, moves to the door and opens it.* HOPE *and* RUSH *are standing on the threshold.*] Well, Mrs. Ferrier! We meet again.

HOPE

[*With the most sincere good manners*]: How do you do! Forgive me. I'll only stay a minute.

PAULINE

[*Taken aback*]: Come in. [HOPE *enters. She is white and tense but in complete possession of herself.* RUSH *shows signs of nerves.*]

STEPHEN

How did you get here?

HOPE

I made Rush bring me.

STEPHEN

How did you know?

HOPE

You told godfather.

STEPHEN

What do you want?

HOPE

I want you to come home.

STEPHEN

Home!

HOPE

And listen to what I've got to say before you go any further with this farce.

STEPHEN

It's not a farce!

HOPE

It is because I shan't make any use of it.

STEPHEN

Not after what I did yesterday?

HOPE

I don't think what you did yesterday is important.

STEPHEN

Hope! How can you say! . . .

HOPE

I know. This is like you. But there you are.

STEPHEN

This isn't a farce, though. Polly and I . . . Ever since that night in the police court we . . .

HOPE

The only thing that matters a hoot to me is having you listen to what I've got to say. What do you think I've been doing all day long?

STEPHEN

I dunno. What?

HOPE

Sitting on my bed. Realizing.

STEPHEN

You're trying to get me back! ! !

HOPE

I don't deny it.

STEPHEN

Well, I won't come back! ! !

HOPE

I wish you'd listen.

STEPHEN

I've suffered enough! I'm tired out! I'm through!

RUSH

I told you, Hope . . .

HOPE

Be quiet! [*To* STEPHEN]: Godfather's expecting you to dine tonight.

STEPHEN

Oh, no, he's not! He told me what he thought of me this morning!

HOPE

I've told him since that I should bring you. You can't let him down.

STEPHEN

I won't go!

HOPE

It's his seventieth birthday dinner. You can't . . .

PAULINE

Steve!

STEPHEN

What?

PAULINE

Here's your hat. [*She hands it to him.*]

STEPHEN

Are *you* letting *me* down?

PAULINE

I told you this was no funeral of mine. [*Pause.* STEPHEN *looks around, gives up the fight, goes to the door and opens it.*]

HOPE

[*To* PAULINE, *very simply*]: Thank you. I'm sorry if I've interfered with plans of yours.

PAULINE

They weren't *my* plans.

HOPE

Oh!

STEPHEN

[*At the door*]: Are you coming, Hope?

HOPE

Yes. [*She turns and goes out passing* STEPHEN *in the door.*]

STEPHEN

[*To Pauline*]: Wait for me. I'll be back.

PAULINE

Don't keep her waiting *now.* [STEPHEN *goes out closing the door after him.* PAULINE *stands looking at the door a moment. Then she turns and discovers* RUSH *looking ever so pleasant.*] Hey! You can't stay here!

RUSH

[*So innocent*]: Just while they get a start. [*He picks up the brandy bottle.*] May I help myself?

PAULINE

You've got your nerve!

RUSH

Bigelow's the name. [*He pours a drink.*]

PAULINE

[*Amused in spite of herself*]: Thanks. I'll remember.

RUSH

[*Eye to eye*]: If you're not doing anything for dinner?

PAULINE

[*Eye to eye*]: Success at last!

RUSH

We *might* stop down to Atlantic City over Sunday.

PAULINE

Why don't we? It's a wonderful try-out town.

RUSH

I wouldn't want Steve coming back here either.

PAULINE

No. . . . Will they get together?

RUSH

That's their funeral. Kiss?

PAULINE

Why not? [*They do. The* DETECTIVES *crash the door.*]

RUSH

My God!

PAULINE

[*Scream*]: Ah!

1ST DETECTIVE

Caught you!

2ND DETECTIVE

Hey! She's switched on us!

1ST DETECTIVE

Where is he?

2ND DETECTIVE

Where have you got him?

PAULINE

His wife just took him home. [*She returns to* RUSH's *embrace.*]

1ST DETECTIVE

His wife!

2ND DETECTIVE

Say, what gets into married folks these days?

1ST DETECTIVE

I can tell you, Ralph. I can tell you in a word.

2ND DETECTIVE

What is it?

1ST DETECTIVE

Prohibition. Why, I was reading in the paper how the whole divorce question is just the way women drink since prohibition. Just the other day, I was reading . . .

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE NINTH SCENE

The Bedroom of the Ferriers' *flat as in the opening scene of the play. The evening of the same day as the scene preceding.*

The curtain rises as soon as possible. Hope *and* Stephen *are dressing for dinner. The action of the scene is dressing and the dialogue, even in its most emotional passages, never interrupts the dressing. At the end of the scene,* Hope *is wearing her most becoming evening frock and* Stephen *is attired in tail coat and white bow.*

Hope

[*Speaking as the curtain rises*]: Don't make me cry again! That's all I ask! I'll look a sight!

Stephen

All I ask is a little peace and you're making me go to a dinner I don't want to go to! I'm sorry I've made you cry, but . . .

Hope

It's all right! We always say things we're sorry for to each other! That's because we love each other, Steve!

STEPHEN

It's a hell of a funny way of showing love!

HOPE

There are worse ways!

STEPHEN

If I could understand what's come over you since yesterday!

HOPE

I've been *trying* to tell you! I don't know myself! I only know that all of a sudden everything went ridiculous and I started to laugh! After that, I don't remember.

STEPHEN

But it was after that I . . .

HOPE

They tell me that German doctor jumped on me. I don't remember. They tell me you hit me.

STEPHEN

Hope, I did!

HOPE

I didn't notice.

STEPHEN

I knocked you out!

HOPE

I was knocked out the minute I started laughing!

STEPHEN

If that were true!

HOPE

It *is* true! And when I came to, hours and hours later, I'd seen it all! Things as they really are and have got to be! And I saw that the way for us isn't divorce! It's marriage and more marriage till we either kill each other or die natural deaths!

STEPHEN

Why *didn't* you take the Century yesterday?

HOPE

I don't believe I ever meant to take it!

STEPHEN

It's no use, Hope! Much better admit we've failed and start again! Each on his own!

HOPE

But I'd so much rather start again with you!

STEPHEN

I couldn't! I'm too tired!

HOPE

Think of the fun we used to have together!

STEPHEN

That's all so long ago!

HOPE

I can't imagine having any fun without you!

STEPHEN

I can't imagine anything without you! But I wouldn't risk it! Things couldn't ever be the same again!

HOPE

They could be different! Now that I've got a job!

STEPHEN

A lot of help that'll be!

HOPE

It will! I'm not idle any more! I need eight hours sleep just as much as you do!

STEPHEN

It's too late, Hope!

HOPE

Think of the children!

STEPHEN

Not even for them.

HOPE

You want another baby! I'll chuck my job and give you one! Right now! Well, as soon as possible!

STEPHEN

The two we've got didn't keep us together.

HOPE

We need each other!

STEPHEN

We'll have to learn to do without!

HOPE

We can't! Not you and I! We're not big enough to be out alone! We were like the frog who puffed himself up to be an ox! Life's punctured us! And left us just two . . . just two in tens and tens of millions! That's every bit of significance we've got!

STEPHEN

Even a punctured frog wants a little peace.

HOPE

Well, I'm not going to give up the man I love for something I've found out's a lot of hooey!

STEPHEN

Hope, for God's sake!

HOPE

I mean it! I had ideas! I've got over 'em! I thought I had great wasted powers in me! I haven't! I wanted a place in the outside world! My place there's worth about two cents! I was bored with all this! I've only just seen all this for the first time! I'm sick to death of myself, Steve! And when you're that way you

turn to the one you love and trust the most! [*A dark look from* STEPHEN.] I mean it! I thought there was more romance in life for me! That turned out the silliest mess of all!

STEPHEN

You *did* go to Atlantic City with him!

HOPE

Didn't you know?

STEPHEN

I wasn't sure. I wish you hadn't told me.

HOPE

Steve! Please! [*He moves away from her gloomily.*] We can cope with anything but our own silliness. That always gets us. Don't you know it does?

STEPHEN

[*Gloom*]: I know that it takes two to make a divorce. Just as it takes two to make a marriage. I know this whole thing must be half my fault. I know I bored you.

HOPE

Maybe you did! But I still want you back!

STEPHEN

Don't think I wouldn't come back if I could!

HOPE

You can!

STEPHEN

[*Shaking his head*]: A man can take just so much punishment. Then his emotional muscles get worn out.

HOPE

But when you admit you're wrong and say you're sorry you're given another chance!

STEPHEN

Not always.

HOPE

Why even the children!

STEPHEN

You and I aren't children. What's broken can't be mended. The cistern that held the waters of our marriage *is* broken, Hope. The waters have run out over the ground and made a mess of mud and puddles. Give it up, Hope! It would only mean more unhappiness.

HOPE

I'm not afraid of unhappiness any more!

STEPHEN

Oh, Hope!

HOPE

I'm not! I've found out something that none of 'em told us about marriage. I've found out it isn't meant to be happy at all! It's meant to be one long knock down and drag out battle royal between two people who can't live without each other! And I look forward to thirty years of you pulling me the way I don't want to go and of me pulling you . . .

STEPHEN

And you *like* that idea?

HOPE

Yes! With an armistice now and then, I love it! Armies aren't armies till they get to war and men and women can't be men and women . . .

STEPHEN

Till they get married and start slinging dishes?

HOPE

More or less. And with the man I love I'm ready to fight it out if it takes all summer! Whatever comes up to be fought about! Gas bills! Eight hours sleep! Girl friends! Boy friends!

STEPHEN

Who wins?

HOPE

Neither one of us! That's the whole point!

STEPHEN

There you go getting ideas again!

HOPE

Good ideas, Steve!

STEPHEN

I've heard so damn many ideas! And they were all good! Only they weren't for us.

HOPE

I love you, Steve! What are you staring at?

STEPHEN

The balance of my life if I should come back!

HOPE

How do you like it?

STEPHEN

[*Pause, then*]: I can't believe it!

HOPE

Steve!

STEPHEN

I can't! The glamour's gone! The reality's gone, too! You made me believe you'd got over loving me! You killed my faith in my love for you! I can't come back just to an idea! And there isn't anything else to come back to!

HOPE

Yes, there is! Yes, there is!

STEPHEN

Not any more! We've seen how grand our marriage might have been! We've seen it was the one, big, marvellous thing that'll ever happen to either one of us! Bigger than both of us put together with the kids thrown in! But we couldn't see it without killing it! And there it lies between us! Done for!

HOPE

[*Pause*]: That's final?

STEPHEN

I'm afraid so.

HOPE

I won't say any more then. [*She moves unsteadily toward her dressing table.*] We've still got godfather's dinner to get through. [*She sits down.*]

STEPHEN

I'm sorry, Hope. I wish to God . . .

HOPE

[*Brushing the tears from her eyes*]: I started it. I got ideas. It serves me right.

STEPHEN

You *are* a sport!

HOPE

I don't look much like one. [*He slips on his coat. He crosses to the dressing table to adjust his tie in the mirror. He jostles her again just as in the opening scene.*]

STEPHEN

I'm sorry! Was I crowding you again?

HOPE

No. . . . No. . . . [*But it is more than she can bear. She bursts into bitter weeping.*]

STEPHEN

[*A distressed hand going to her shoulder*]: Hope! Hope, my darling!

HOPE

Don't! [*He gives up and moves away wearily.*]

STEPHEN

Maybe if I weren't so tired!

HELENA

[*Off-stage*]: Are you still here, Hope?

HOPE

[*Gulping as she lifts her head*]: Yes? [STEPHEN *turns and from this point on never takes his eyes off her.*]

HELENA

[*Off-stage*]: It's Helena! I'm coming up! I've got something for you. [HOPE *has just managed to pull herself together as* HELENA *enters. She is handsomely dressed for the evening and carries a box which appears to contain orchids or gardenias.*] Godfather sent his car for me and these were in it for you . . . [*She sees* STEPHEN.] Hullo, Stephen! [STEPHEN *is too deeply immersed in his contemplation of the back of Hope's neck to reply to her greeting. She senses a situation and carries on.*] Here. [*She puts the box on* HOPE'S *dressing table.* HOPE *proceeds to open it and take out the contents.*] You'd better put 'em on. I wasn't honored. I've got your present for godfather in the car. It's the Ashendean "Don Quixote" he admired. It sets you back a hundred and eighty, Stephen,

but you're getting it for what it cost me. Well, are you ready?

HOPE

Listen to what godfather's written on the card. "Dearest Hope and Stephen: Heartily know, when half-gods go, the gods arrive." [*A pause.* STEPHEN'S *eyes fall.* HELENA *darts a quick look at him. Then*]: My gods *have* arrived. A little late. [*She rises, pinning the flowers to her dress. She turns, turning herself full on. They both look at her, but she sees only* STEPHEN. *Her voice is strained, but her head is nobly high.*] You're looking handsome, Steve. I'm proud of you.

STEPHEN

[*Low*]: I've never seen you look lovelier, Hope.

HOPE

Shall we peek in at our invalids before we go?

STEPHEN

All right.

HOPE

And then will you make Helena and me a cocktail? You make better cocktails than any man I know. I haven't had a decent cocktail since . . .

STEPHEN

I'll make a cocktail. [*She goes to him.*]

HOPE

Will you kiss me, too?

STEPHEN

Certainly. I'd be glad to. [*He does. She looks up at him like a very little girl.*]

HOPE

Is the glamour all gone, Steve?

STEPHEN

[*Going down for the third time*]: Why should *I* be afraid of unhappiness?

HELENA

[*Low*]: Why, indeed!

HOPE

[*Afraid to believe her ears*]: Steve!

STEPHEN

[*A sigh, then*]: Let's be on our way. [HOPE's *arm slips tensely through his. Doggedly he starts for the door.*]

HELENA

[*Softly, as they cross the threshold*]: Good boy, Stephen! [*She is following them as the curtain falls.*]

THE END

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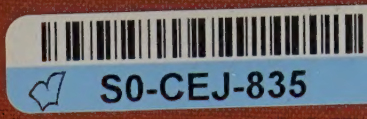
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